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FROM BUD TO BLOOM:

York's Rainbow Rose Center blossoms

By Tesla Taliaferro
The Central Voice York Correspondent

Spring has come to the region and despite the turmoil that suddenly struck Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world, the flowers have begun to bloom at the Rainbow Rose Center. And those blooms include the center which is York County's LGBTQIA+ resource center, where formalization of the organization and its programming is well underway.

In February, dedicated center volunteers discussed how to move the center forward. They vote unanimously to seek 501(c)3 nonprofit status to better serve the York LGBTQIA+ community.

In March, the organization held its first official board meeting where those attending elected a standing board, adopted organizational bylaws, and established committees. The newly elected board decided, for the time being, to keep the center as a volunteer-based organization while establishing definite structure through focused committees.

In April, with officers elected and bylaws adopted, the center filed Articles of Incorporation with the Department of State to officially mark creation of the nonprofit organization. This is the first of many steps the organization and its board will undertake.

> **"...the next few months will be a challenging time..."**
> -Anne Gray, head of Red Rose Center Volunteer Comittee

The COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunities for the board to reach out to the York LGBTQIA+ community in new and creative ways. While unable to hold office hours in person, the center continues to serve the York County LGBTQIA+ community by answering

Please see **BLOSSOMING,** page **9**

Silver linings

How one small business owner is coping with the COVID-19 closure and planning a comeback

> **"I just hope...that once everything gets back to a sense of normalcy, small businesses especially will be remembered."**
> -Charlie Good, owner of Homestyle Charlie, a gift shop in Hershey

By Frank Pizzoli

March 23, 2020 - When our telephone interview began, Pennsylvania had recorded 479 confirmed cases of COVID-19. The PA Department of Health had announced the first confirmed case in Dauphin County. Still, Charlie Good was upbeat. He's owner of Homestyle Charlie in Hershey's Briarcrest Square which is a small boutique shop cards, gifts, retro objects d'art, and jewelry. Like business everywhere, he faces the challenge of first closing operations (except online) and then calculating a come-back after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Central Voice: Did Gov. Wolf's mandatory closing surprise you?

Charlie Good: I was disappointment, but not surprised. I was expecting it for a few weeks prior. There was some chatter online in some small business Facebook groups. Since visitor numbers were already starting to decline, businesses were already feeling "shut down" regardless of this mandate.

CV: But you do have online shopping?

CG: We have tried to expand our online offerings but a lot of our items are best experienced in person. Like many small shop owners, I've tried very hard to create a unique, physical store so customers have a fun experience while shopping in person.

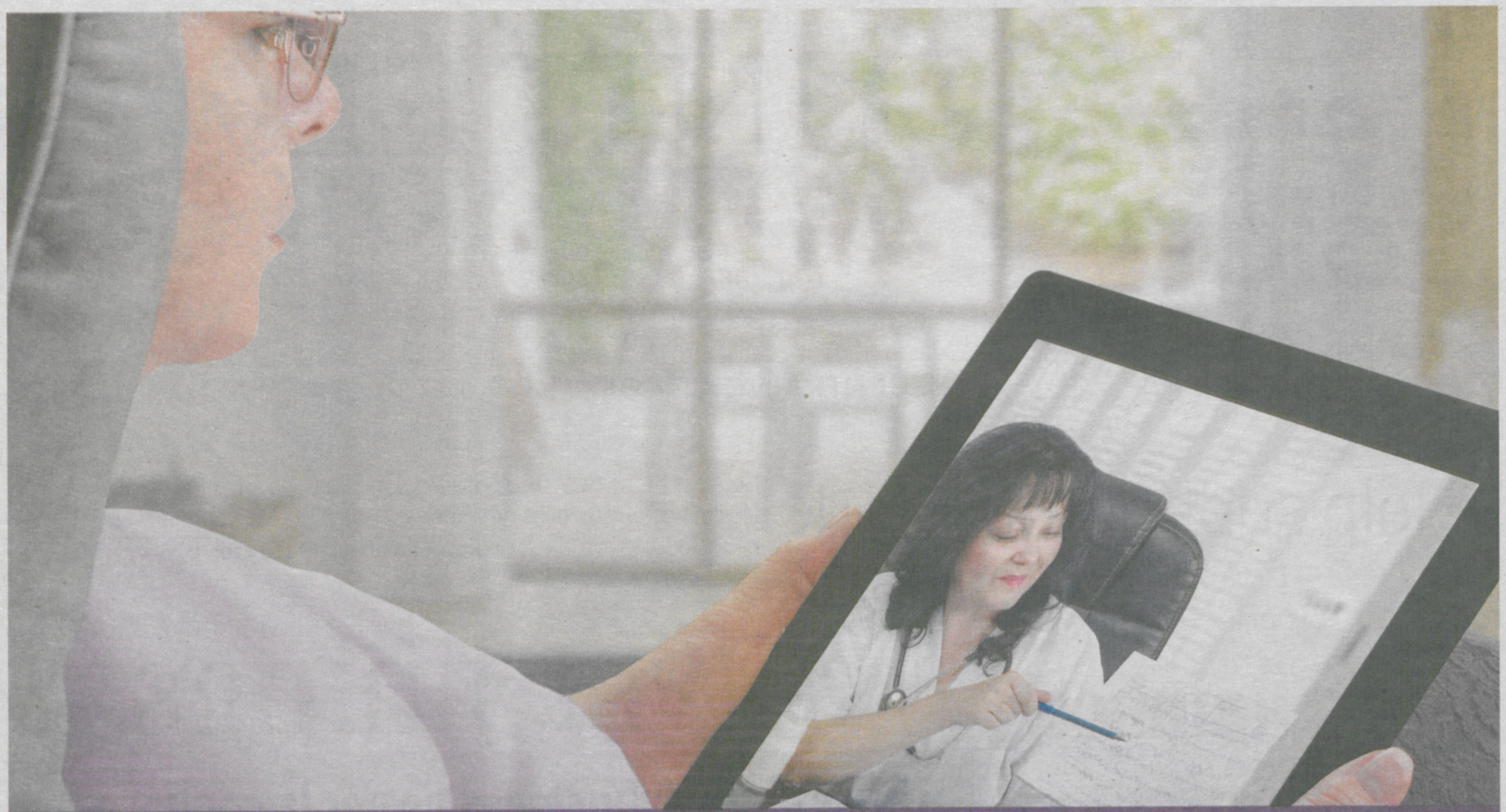
CV: Now that you're closed, are you piecing together a 'come back' plan?

CG: Yes, although the scope depends on the length of the shutdown. And without knowing how long, it's difficult to plan an exact strategy. With a shutdown of just a few weeks, it's easier to keep in touch with customers through emails and Facebook posts.

CV: And with a longer shutdown?

CG: With a longer shutdown, that "maintenance plan" becomes more of a grand "re-opening" style

Please see **SMALL BUSINESS,** page **21**



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If you are experiencing severe symptoms such as trouble breathing, you should visit an emergency department in your community for immediate care. If you can, call ahead so they may prepare for your arrival and prevent the spread of any illness. But do not delay if you have severe breathing problems.

For the latest information and resources on how we're managing COVID-19, please visit **UPMCPinnacle.com/COVID19.**

If you believe you have been exposed to the coronavirus and have no symptoms, you may contact your doctor for advice. Practice routine precautions such as social distancing.

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Political Updates | WORLD & NATIONAL VOICES

INTERNATIONAL

POLAND

Third of Poland declared "LGBTQ-free zones"

The European Union Parliament formally condemned Poland for trying to create "LGBTI-free" zones, with lawmakers comparing the policies to "Jew-free" zones that existed during World War II. Despite this, approximately one-third of Poland territories now declare themselves as such. That amounts to over 80 different municipalities or territorial areas — more than double the 30-plus areas whose local governments had already declared themselves as "LGBTI-free" zones and had passed anti-LGBTQ resolutions from July. The increase suggests that the queerphobic laws have swayed other elected officials to emulate them.

LONDON

World's first Muslim Pride festival

After a successful crowdfunding campaign, London played host to the world's first-ever Muslim Pride event April 11. Spearheaded by the UK's leading Muslim LGBTIQ+ charity Imaan, ImaanFest organisers successfully raised close to $20,000 in order to host the groundbreaking event. "We as LGBTIQ+ Muslims often find ourselves isolated, without community and frequently facing homophobic, biphobic, transphobic AND Islamaphobic abuse," Imaan explained in a crowdfunding campaign statement. Speakers included US black bisexual Muslim activist and author Blair Imani, who went viral last year due to her parents' sweet expressions of pride in her first book, Modern Herstory, being published. Other speakers include queer British-Iraqi writer and filmmaker Amrou Al-Kadhi and trans activist Asifa Lahore.

SWITZERLAND

Voters favor of LGBT protection bill

Voters in Switzerland have backed a proposal to make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and sexual identity illegal. The result - 63.1% in favor to 36.9% against - is a huge boost for Switzerland's LGBT community. Proposal backers argued Swiss law on the issue lagged far behind other countries in Europe. Opponents of the new law argued it could restrict free speech. In Switzerland, discrimination because of race or religion is already illegal.

Pink Cross Switzerland said: "The result proves a strong sign of acceptance for lesbians, gays and bisexuals. After the clear yes, the LGBT community will use this momentum to achieve the consistent implementation of the penal code and to enforce marriage equality."

RUSSIA

Putin rules out Russia legalizing gay marriage

President Vladimir Putin said Russia would not legalize gay marriage as long as he was in the Kremlin. He made clear he would not allow the traditional notion of mother and father to be subverted by what he called "parent number 1" and "parent number 2". "As far as 'parent number 1' and 'parent number 2' goes, I've already spoken publicly about this and I'll repeat it again: as long as I'm president this will not happen. There will be dad and mum," Putin said. During his two decades in power, Putin has closely aligned himself with the Orthodox Church and sought to distance Russia from liberal Western values, including attitudes towards homosexuality and gender fluidity.

NATIONAL

SOUTH CAROLINA

Anti-LGBTQ curriculum law challenged

The National Center for Lesbian Rights and Lambda Legal, private counsel Womble Bond Dickinson, Brazil & Burke, and law professor Clifford Rosky, filed a federal lawsuit challenging a South Carolina statute that prohibits public school health education from including any discussion of same-sex relationships except in the context of sexually transmitted diseases. The lawsuit is filed on behalf of the student organization Gender and Sexuality Alliance, as well as the Campaign for Southern Equality and South Carolina Equality Coalition, including their members who are public school students in the state. The lawsuit, Gender and Sexuality Alliance v. Spearman, alleges that S.C. Code § 59-32-30(A)(5), a provision of the South Carolina's 1988 Comprehensive Health Education Act, violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by discriminating against students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ). The statute prohibits districts from including in their health education any "discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships including, but not limited to, homosexual relationships except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted diseases."

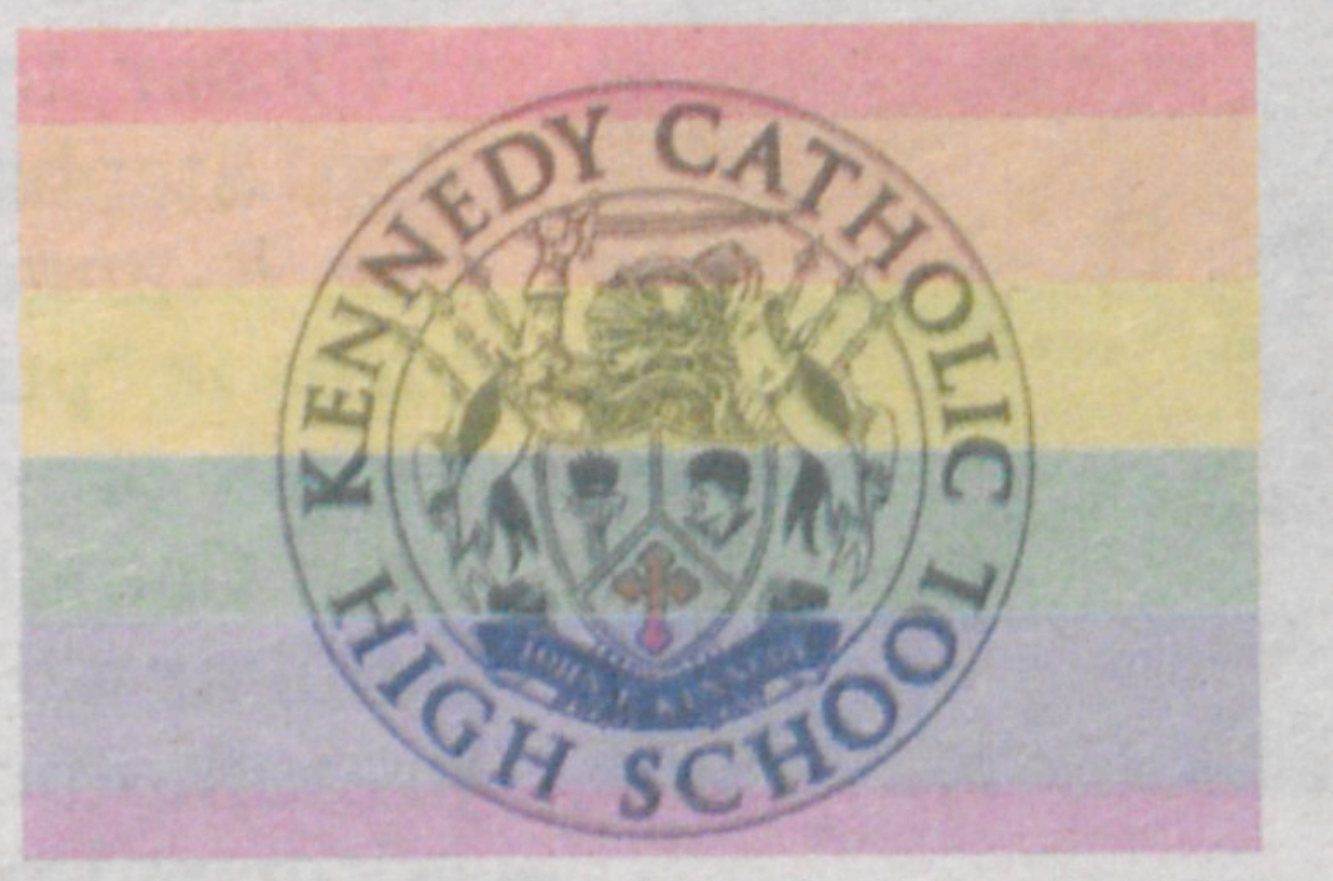
TENNESSEE

Republicans want to tax Tampons

Republican lawmakers in Tennessee are raising objections to a proposal that would add feminine hygiene products to the list of items that can be purchased during the state's annual sales-tax holiday, the Associated Press reported. According to the AP, the GOP lawmakers worried that women would abuse the law and purchase too many feminine hygiene products during the pause on state sales tax on some items — including computers and clothing. "I would think since it's a sales tax holiday, there's really no limit on the number of items anybody can purchase," Republican state Sen. Joey Hensley said during a debate on the proposal on Tuesday, according to the AP. "I don't know how you would limit the number of items someone could purchase." Eliminating the so-called "tampon tax" has been a growing movement in states across the country.

WASHINGTON

Catholic high school forces out two teachers



Two popular teachers at Burien's Kennedy Catholic High School – Paul Danforth and Michelle Beattie – were forced to "voluntarily resign" because they both identify as gay. Both reportedly were asked to resign not simply for identifying as gay – but also for being engaged to marry their same sex partners.

Despite a 2006 state law that prohibits workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, the school is apparently exempt due to its religious affiliation. Kennedy is deferring this policy decision to the Archdiocese of Seattle, of which it is a member.

"Both teachers voluntarily resigned their positions. As this is a personnel matter, we cannot comment further," was the official statement from the Archdiocese. Reports are that there is a "morality clause" in the school's employment contracts that stipulates that employees must abide by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Divorce is also against church law, but many teachers at Catholic schools have gone through divorces without losing their jobs.

STATE

Allegheny County bans conversion therapy

Allegheny County Council voted 13-2 to ban the practice of conversion therapy in the county. Conversion therapy is a widely discredited practice used to attempt to change a person's feelings of same-sex attraction or to change their gender identity.

Council voted 13-2 in favor of the ordinance, which was introduced by Paul Klein, D-Point Breeze.

"Call it what you will, this practice causes real harm and, as such, is a public health and safety threat," said council member Paul Klein, D-Point Breeze.

Bipartisan Industrial Hemp Caucus formed

A new legislative caucus, the Bipartisan Industrial Hemp Caucus, has been launched to promote and expand the industrial hemp industry in Pennsylvania. Co-chairs state are Reps. Margo L. Davidson and Russ Diamond. The BIHC will seek to create a more attractive business environment and culture by spreading information about industrial hemp and its many applications. "The industrial hemp industry perfectly synergizes our rural and urban economies. It will spur job development and create new profitable economic opportunities in our agriculture, research and development, and manufacturing sectors." Davidson, D-Delaware, said. "Pennsylvania once led the nation in industrial hemp production, and we believe the BIHC will help grow our economy and put our Commonwealth on a path to once again be an industry leader."

COVID-19 like money – brings out best & worst

Publisher's Voice

By Frank Pizzoli

"I swear COVID-19 is like money. It brings out the best and worst in people," said a trusted colleague in the midst of another remote work day.

Besides our own day-to-day challenges big and small, we are now challenged with coming together as a community. That will determine how we end the crisis.

Best

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams has pointed out that African Americans are at higher risk to the coronavirus due in large part to historical factors. Data reveals that African Americans are being killed by the coronavirus at a high rate. Yet they are not "biologically or genetically predisposed to get COVID-19." Adams said poor housing and lack of jobs are contributing to more coronavirus among black and Hispanic Americans.

"They are socially predisposed to coronavirus exposure and to have a higher incidence of the very diseases that put you at risk for severe complications of coronavirus," Adams said.

Perhaps as a national community we will endeavor to improve these conditions exacerbated by coronavirus. And bring out the best in us.

Worst

A Trump administration Bible study teacher says COVID-19 may be God's punishment for lots of things. In a study guide posted to his blog, Ralph Drollinger lays out the case that the US is being punished by God for homosexuality, environmentalism, and other things conservatives generally don't like.

Closer to home, Republican State Rep. Stephanie Borowicz, a conservative Evangelical, proclaimed that the virus is "punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins." Raised Roman Catholic although long gone, I'm familiar with venial and mortal sins, not presumptuous sins.

Borowicz's House Resolution 835 states: "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow; and with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth."

The occurrence of hideous diseases like HIV and COVID-19 are our fault. Nothing sublime there.

Best

Alarmed by disturbing warnings that racist attacks on Asian Americans are increasing in Pennsylvania and across America during the coronavirus crisis, a group of Pennsylvania lawmakers, the Pennsylvania State Police and other stakeholders urged vigilance against this rising evil.

"We are hearing, both locally and as part of a nationwide problem, that our Asian American communities are being attacked and maligned as somehow responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic," said Rep. Dan Frankel, D-Allegheny. "While ridiculous on its face, this line of thinking is dangerous, and we unfortunately know very well in my district what can happen when a community is made to be a scapegoat for society's problems. We are here today to say to the Asian communities throughout Pennsylvania: 'We are taking this seriously, and we have your back.'"

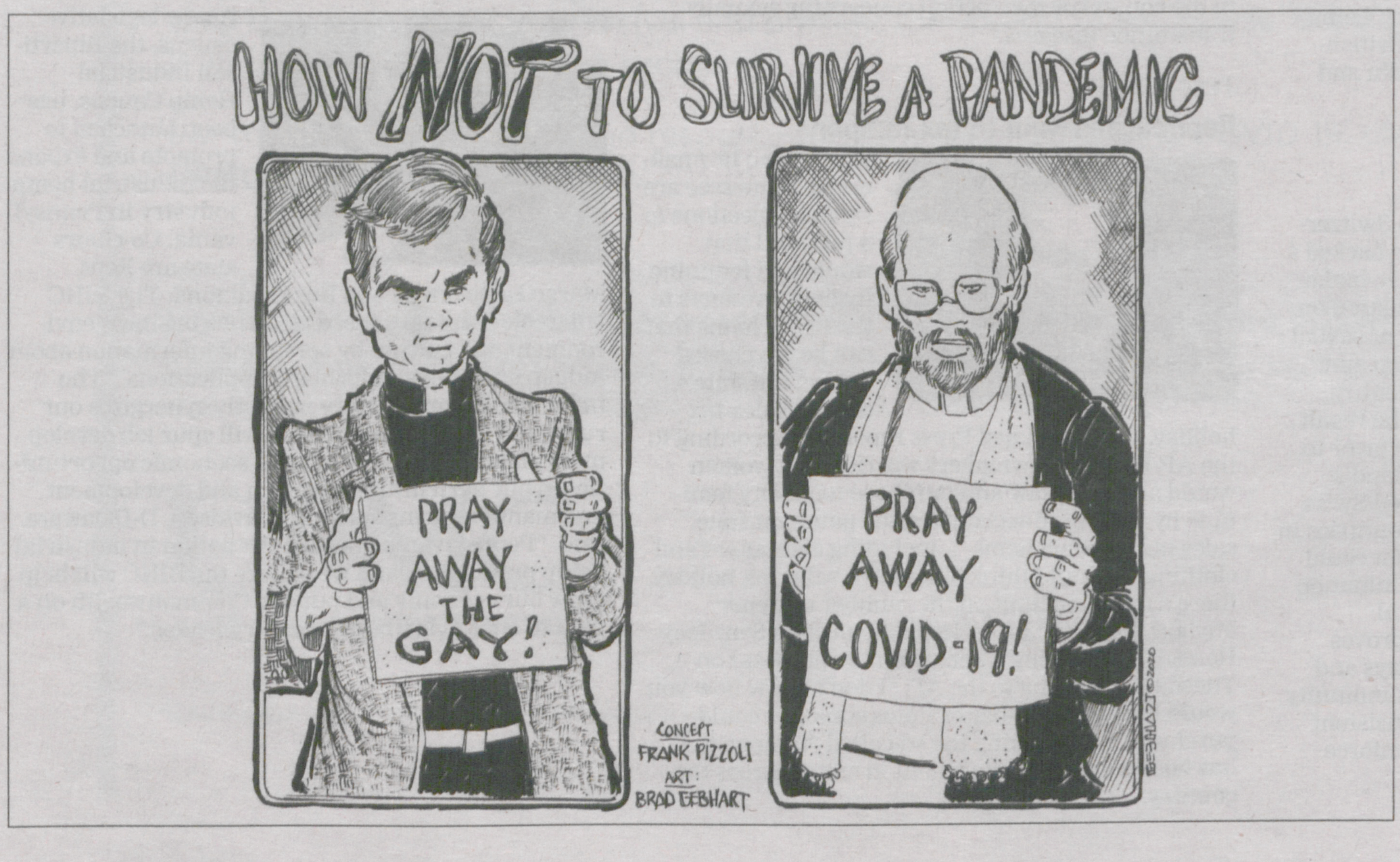
"It truly saddens me to hear that the Asian American community has been the target of such painful attacks. I would like to urge members of the Asian American community and people of the commonwealth to report these crimes so they can be addressed," said Rep. Patty Kim, D-Dauphin. "Reporting would allow us to direct resources, education and better understand what's going on before the situation gets worse. Even though we need to keep a safe distance from each other, it's incredibly important that we stand with the community and show our support."

"Crimes against anyone based in their race, creed, gender, country of origin or sexual orientation are absolutely unacceptable," said Senate Democratic Leader Jay Costa Jr., D-Allegheny. "There is no place for discrimination in Pennsylvania at any time. But as we are in the midst of a public health crisis, we need now more than ever to work together and support each other as best we can."

Worst

In open defiance of known science, hosts of Evangelical Christian congregations defied social distancing procedures. They willingly put themselves, their families, each other and the community-at-large at risk for acquiring coronavirus. That is not by anyone's adult thinking pro-life. Other 'Gospel of Prosperity' preachers foisted preposterous claims on their followers. Asking them to put their hand on their television screen and receive a protective blessing and send money. At press time, not a single mega-church preacher has come forth with plans to use their wealth to combat the virus. No Balm in Gilead there.

By whatever value or belief or life experience, let's pledge to speak to the best in each other. That's an inoculation against hate in the future. Like my experience with HIV taught me – *Silence = Death.*



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We realize many of you are struggling with the challenges caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The LGBTQ+ community understands better than most how devastating a pandemic can be. Afterall, we struggled through the initial AIDS crisis and came through the other side.

We also realize that many small businesses in our community are facing extreme challenges to keep doors open, or to reopen when restrictions are lifted. *The Central Voice* is one of those businesses.

We're working hard to keep you informed and to promote local businesses, but we can't continue without your help. Your contribution, no matter the amount, is valuable and deeply appreciated. Every dollar you donate will go toward continuing the publication of this newspaper.

With your support, *The Central Voice* will be a central figure in helping the LGBTQ+ community and its businesses to recover.

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CENTRAL PA'S LGBT NEWS SOURCE

Cartooning is semi-serious business

By Jeff Falk

Article courtesy of Harrisburg Magazine

There are few things more mentally stimulating or powerful than the interaction of words and images.

But if a picture is worth a thousand words, then a political cartoon is worth its weight in gold. In good political cartoons, the words feed off the illustrations and the illustrations feed off the words, causing a mesmerizing presentation that has the ability to stop us in our tracks, for a good three seconds.

Political cartoons are designed to inform, entertain, educate and influence. They are social commentary seeking social justice, but one does not have to agree with the creator's point of view to appreciate them.

Brad Gebhart and Frank Pizzoli practice the somewhat lost art of political cartooning, together. Pizzoli is the founding publisher and editor of the Harrisburg-based newspaper, *The Central Voice*, Central Pennsylvania's LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) News Source, and Gebhart doubles as a free-lance cartoonist.

Their political-cartoon collaboration, "From the minds of Brad and Frank," appears on the op-ed page of every issue of the bi-monthly publication. Pizzoli has a lot of ideas bouncing around inside his brain, and Gebhart brings them to life, with the help of a pencil.

"It is *The Voice*, with cartoons, and it's a collaboration of words and pictures creating that voice," says Gebhart. "We're informing. We're educating. We're having fun. We're not chastising. It's our voice. And yeah, it's our voice and we want to have an impact. I love it because it's a collaboration, and we're making an impact with art. We feel like we're making some sort of changes."

"What makes it more traditional is that it's not grad-school cartooning," adds Pizzoli. "We go back and forth until we're both satisfied – sometimes a hundred times. I, as often as I can, will take a national story and localize it, and if I can involve Brad I will. It's about keeping Brad's skills involved. It's more than going on the internet and seeing what cartoons we can buy today. He becomes part of the entire editorial presentation."

While great minds might think alike, the beauty of Pizzoli's and Gebhart's creation is in the cooperation. Each brings his own unique skill set to the table, or living room floor, whichever the case may be at the time.

Pizzoli is the mastermind, well-versed and well-read. Gebhart is an accomplished artist and illustrator, who possesses the ability to put on paper what he sees in his imagination.

But make no mistake about the fact they are both political humans.

"That's pretty much how it works," says Pizzoli. "Concept by Frank Pizzoli, graphic by Brad Gebhart. We've branded it that way. I'll go to Brad and ask, 'How would you illustrate this? I'm primarily the idea guy, and he is the artist guy. But the process is back and forth. It wouldn't work if we weren't collaborating. I can't draw. If I'm going to do it, I might as well write a story. Brad is the other side of the see-saw."

"I'm not Brad the cartoonist," says Gebhart. "It's Brad and Frank doing cartoons. It wouldn't exist without one or the other. It's not just a string of cartoons in a newspaper, it's collaboration. For me, artistically, the process is working. It's another cup of coffee and a chat we can have. But I'm always trying to make it more entertaining, more fun. With art, each time is different."

Over the last 12 years, Gebhart and Pizzoli's collaborative efforts have produced some 72 political cartoons. Some of them have been national in scope, some have been more local or regional in nature and some have commented on how national issues have affected local interests.

"In my mind, it's taking a subject from the political arena, whether it's an issue, a subject or something the president has done, and getting a message across," says Gebhart. "It resonates, but it also tickles your funny bone. Words and images go together to make an impact. You want your audience to take a look and have an 'Ah ha' moment. My job is to illustrate Frank's insight in a visual way, but I also want it to be a good drawing."

"You don't have to read it three times to see what we're coming to you with," says Pizzoli. "That's where Brad's talent comes in. The whole goal is that it won't take you long to understand. The question is, 'What is the nugget? What is the point we're trying to make?' And there might be a conclusion statement at the bottom."

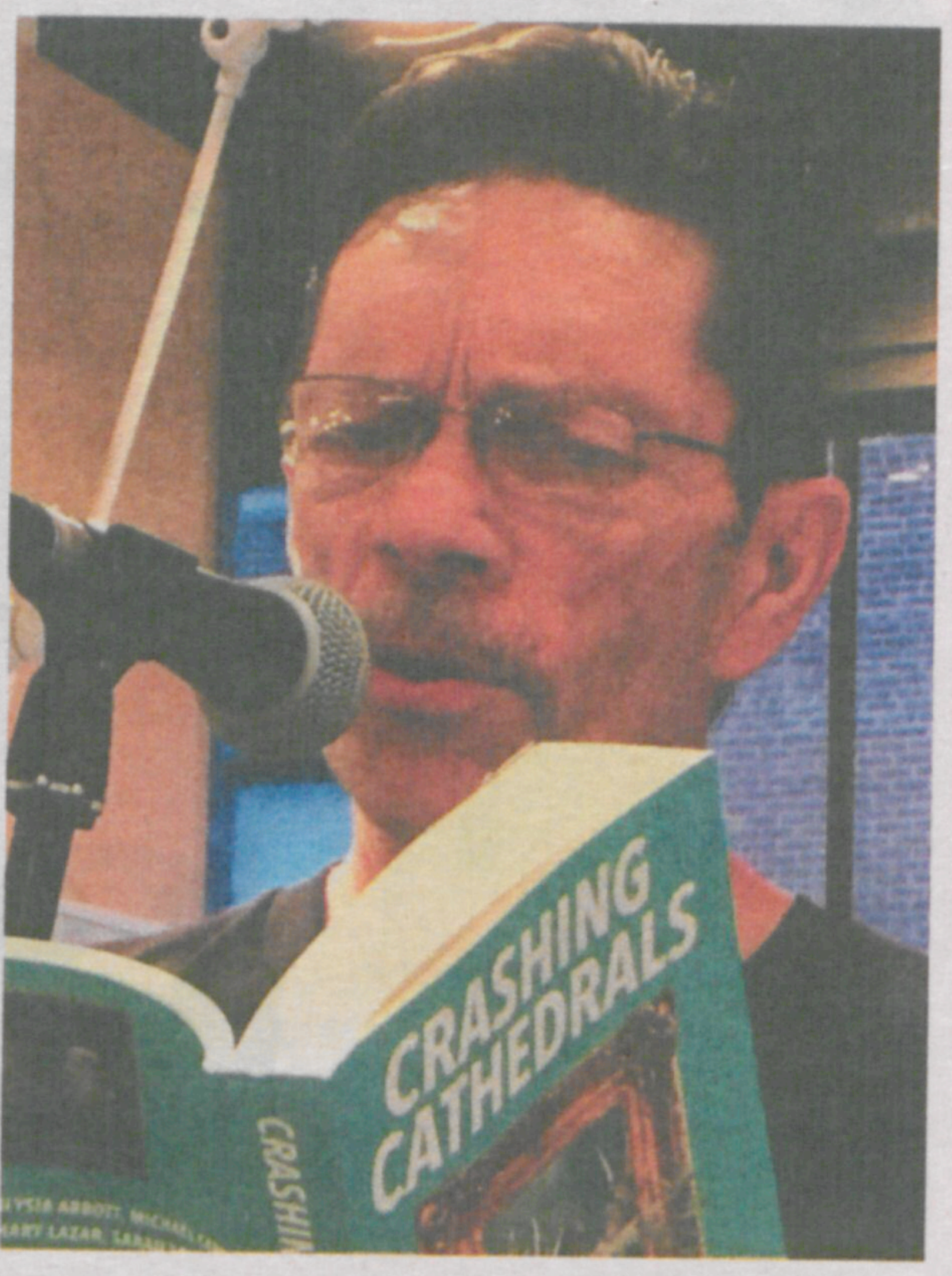
The roots of Gebhart and Pizzoli's partnership were formed at a Central Pennsylvania Pride Festival along the Susquehanna River in the late 2000s, when a protestor got in Pizzoli's face with a twisted finger. After that, the two discussed the possibility of collaborating for a political cartoon in *The Central Voice.*

"Our back story is funny," says Pizzoli. "I knew Brad was artistic. He was teaching art. When I approached him he said, 'I do cartoons.' That's the way it got started. When we talked about it, it was like, 'Let's figure it out. Let's do it.' The first one was a version of that protest."

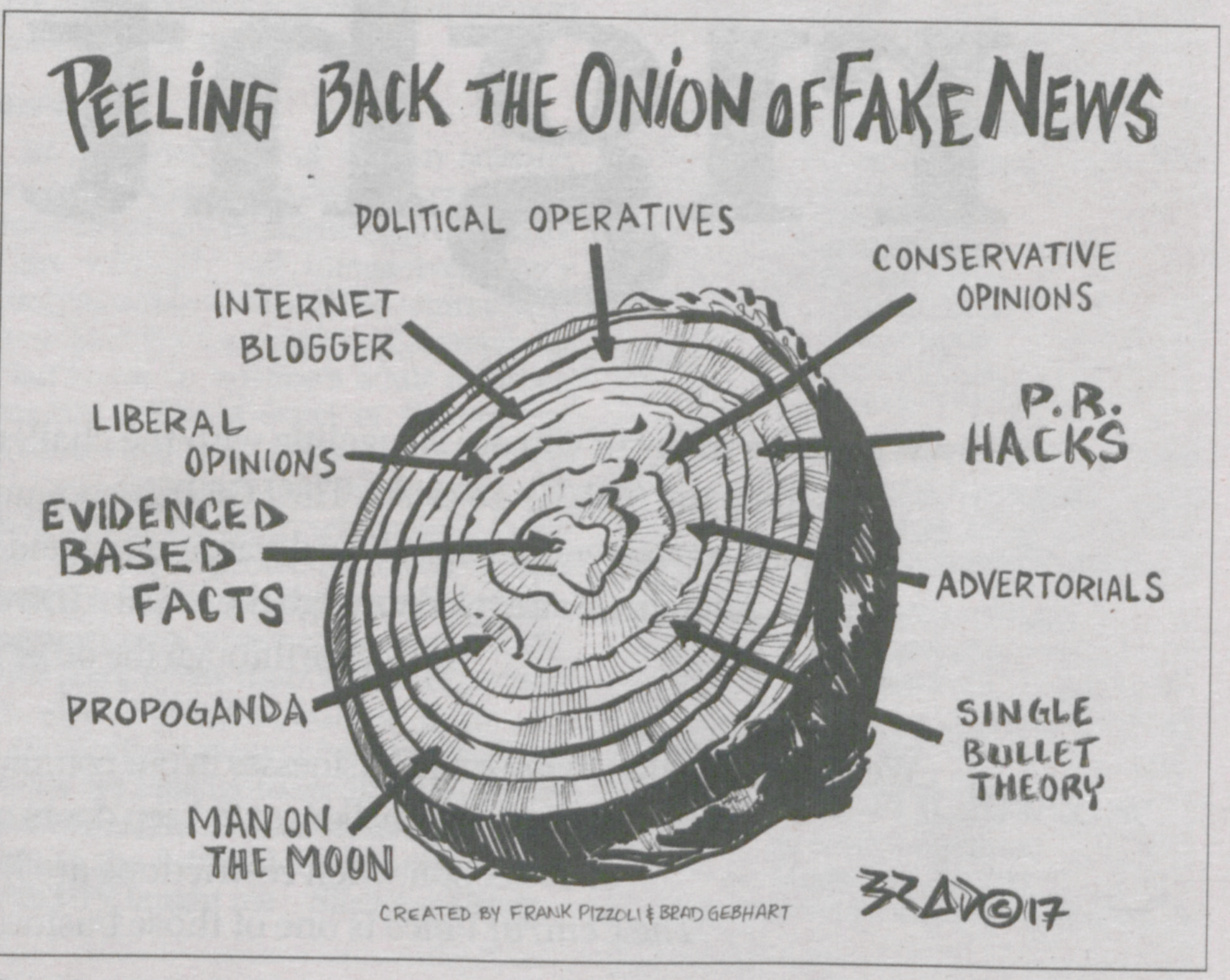
"For me, my first recollection of being artistic was doing a little sculpture in kindergarten," says Gebhart, the development director at Hamilton Health Center. "That and simple drawings of super heroes. But every time you talk to an artist, most will say they can't remember their first day because they've always been drawing. And when an artist evolves, the art gets better. But I've always been into politics, interested in the news and what's going on. I guess I've always wanted to be 'in the know.'"

Gebhart and Pizzoli are constantly creating with their audiences in mind, and the public's delight and acceptance of their political cartoons is simply affirmation that their collaboration works. Last year, their political cartoons were parts of exhibits at Susquehanna Art Museum and Lancaster Art Museum.

Brad Gebhart is the accomplished artist and illustrator behind the cartoons.



Frank Pizzoli is the mastermind who conceptualizes the topics.



One of many Central Voice cartoons by Brad Gephart & Frank Pizzoli

"Our goal is we want to be journalistic with the cartoons," adds Pizzoli. "We hold the community to certain standards. First of all, we're a newspaper. We do journalism. There might be times that we do stories that our community doesn't like. It's called *The Central Voice* because it aspires to give a voice to ideas, not just the LGBT community, but the community at large."

The Central Voice

REAL GAY NEWS

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"The fact that our art work has ended up in two art museums shows it has value," says Gebhart. "They're taking on new life all the time. Frank and I see eye-to-eye on most things. When it comes to fruition it's almost like a chef in a kitchen, and it's on a plate perfectly seasoned, and the audience tastes it and they love it. I always like seeing it in the newspaper. But I know the process was fun."

The ever-changing nature of politics – nationally, regionally and locally – assures Gebhart and Pizzoli will never be at a loss for topics for their cartoons. But that doesn't mean they aren't constantly re-thinking, re-assessing and re-inventing their collaboration.

"What I enjoy is working with Frank," says Gebhart. "It's new. It's real. It feels like we're making a difference. For me, I feel like I'm making an impact. If we can change one mind, educate one person, we've done something important for our community."

"At one point, we said, 'How many of these have we done?,'" says Pizzoli. "It must be a bunch of them, because it works. We've pushed the 'hold' button and we've taken stock. We've asked ourselves, 'Is it getting old? Is it getting old for the readers? Is it getting tired? Are we working in a way that's getting boring?' We've concluded, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'"

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JUNE 20 MARCH GOES DIGITAL

Poor People's Campaign intersectional & queer inclusive

By Louie Marven

Last February, 22 volunteers joined the PA Poor People's Campaign to create banners, signs, patches and t-shirts for the April 25 We Must do MORE Tour that hit Pittsburgh. Pennsylvania is one of 20 states part of a National Call for Moral Revival. A Facebook post says the revival "will demand the implementation of our Moral Agenda and call all people of conscience to engage in deeply moral civic engagement and voting that cares about poor and low-wealth people, the sick, immigrants, workers, the environment, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and peace over war." | PHOTO BY THE CENTRAL VOICE

On March 21, a message that has become all too familiar appeared on a Facebook event called PA Stop: We Must Do MORE Tour:

" Due to the increasing and continued threats of COVID-19 and the necessary social distancing measures we must all take to keep ourselves as safe as we can in these times, this event has been cancelled for the health and safety of all involved.

" Please join us on Thursday, March 26 at 8:30pm ET for a special Digital Mass Meeting - Poverty Amidst Pandemic: Everybody's Got a Right to Live - on the #PoorPeoplesCampaign FB page: fb.com/anewppc "

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival had been planning a stop in Pittsburgh on April 25. It was going to be part of the "We Must Do MORE Tour!" which started in September 2019, with plans to stop in 20 states in advance of a Mass Poor People's Assembly & Moral March in Washington, DC on June 20.

The "MORE" in "We Must Do MORE Tour" stands for the key strategies of the campaign: Mobilizing, Organizing, Registering, and Educating.

Reverends Dr. Liz Theoharis and Bishop Dr. William Barber II were scheduled to join the PA Poor People's Campaign in Butler for a community visit on ecological devastation and in Pittsburgh for a community meal, march, and mass meeting.

But like many event organizers across the country, the Poor People's Campaign, its Pennsylvania chapter, and local organizers have had to adjust to the realities of living in the COVID-19 pandemic.

...like many event organizers across the country, the Poor People's Campaign...had to adjust to the realities of living in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The campaign

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is continuing the unfinished business of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s original 1968 campaign to end poverty, racism, militarism, and ecological devastation. The campaign is state-based with national leadership from Rev. Dr. William Barber and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis.

Barber, the minister and political activist well known for his leadership in North Carolina's "Moral Mondays" protests, was honored in 2015 at The Nation magazine's annual dinner. Theoharis, a minister in the Presbyterian Church and anti-poverty activist, is the director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary.

Across the country, 41 states have chapters, including Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania

In Pennsylvania, the campaign is being managed by a coordinating committee from organizations led by the poor and dispossessed. Organizer Emmie DiCicco identified several participating organizations including Put People First! PA, Movement of Immigrant Leaders, Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration, ACT UP!, Global Women's Strike, MarchOnHarrisburg, Sunrise Movement, and others. The Coordinating Committee is led by the chairs of Pennsylvania's campaign, Borja Gutierrez and Nijmie Dzurinko.

The campaign lists a series of demands on its website, www.poorpeoplescampaign.org. The demands include categories like systemic racism and ecological devastation. The campaign does quite a bit of educating through these demands, asking readers questions like, "Did you know that there are fewer voting rights in 2018 than there were 50 years ago when the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act were passed?" and "Did you know 13.8 million U.S. households cannot afford water?"

The demands also include history lessons on the unfinished work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his call to unite against "triplets of evil—militarism, racism, and economic injustice." The demands cite data that underscores the way these evils impact people living on the margins of our society, including people of color and LGBTQI people across the lifespan.

Other political educational tools on the website include a Poor People's Moral Budget, the Souls of Poor Folk Audit, art and cultural resources, and a number of factsheets (including some that are state-specific) that describe the conditions the campaign is calling to change.

Moving online

So, given the COVID-19 pandemic, how will the Poor People's Campaign move forward with its Mass Poor People's Assembly & Moral March on Washington? Instead of being an in-person march, this "national call for moral revival" will take place online.

DiCicco says, "we are working for the now digital event, which is shining a light on the conditions of those most impacted by systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism, and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism."

"The tour is mobilizing thousands of poor people, clergy, and people of conscience to gather digitally June 20, 2020 to demand the implementation of our Moral Agenda and challenge both political parties to address an economy that isn't working for the majority of people."

Participants can register at www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/june2020. The digital event website explains:

The Mass Poor People's Assembly & Moral March on Washington is going digital! On June 20th, we will hold the largest digital and social media gathering of poor and low-wealth people, moral and religious leaders, advocates, and people of conscience in this nation's history. A global pandemic is exposing even more the already existing crisis of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy and militarism, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism. On June 20, the 140 million poor and low-wealth people across this nation will be heard!

The plans are evolving, with the site providing a digital toolkit with share graphics and sample social media posts, an organizer's toolkit with a letter from Theoharis and Barber and tips for organizing people online, and answers to a list of frequently asked questions.

Doing more

A theme of the June 20 march remains: We Must Do MORE -- mobilizing, organizing, registering, and educating.

Essentially, the overall 'moral agenda' of the events, organizers say, focus on challenging both political parties to address an economy that isn't working for the majority of people. DiCicco emphasized that the campaign is non-partisan, with no elected officials or candidates speaking from the stage at events or serving on organizing committees.

"This is not about left and right, Democrat or Republican but about right and wrong." The campaign does make demands of candidates and officials. "Since June, when we held a town hall during our national Moral Congress in Washington D.C, we have been demanding a DNC debate to discuss poverty."

These demands have certainly not let up. "In the midst of this current pandemic which exposes the absolute rot of our current capitalist system, our demands-including healthcare for all and affordable and decent housing for all-are more important than ever. Additionally, the current crisis shows how the vast majority of this country is just one missed paycheck, one illness, one month's rent away being homeless or worse."

BLOSSOMING from page 1

questions online and providing virtual support to those in need. This is where Shannon McElroy, who joins the board as the Marketing and Communications Committee chair, and Shae Habersham, chair of the Community Outreach Committee, will get to shine. McElroy has already begun to get the social media pages under better management and is creating social media policies. Habersham is working with her committee to determine the parameters for organizations, agencies, and businesses that the center would potentially want to partner with to fulfill its mission.

While still in the early stages of achieving nonprofit status, the center, like many small businesses and nonprofit organizations, is feeling the financial pressure during this time. Sara Seymore, who heads the Fundraising Committee, is formulating new ideas to help the center continue meet the needs of their mission. And though school is out during the crisis, Eli Holland-Garcia, who coordinates the efforts of the Academic Support Committee, will continue to reach out to local Gay Straight Alliance programs to see how the center can best support them.

Rather than cancel Equality Fest events, the board plans to postpone or combine the events in the fall.

The crisis has also put on hold many of the center's Spring and Summer events. Rather than cancel the annual Equality Fest Jr. and Equality Fest events, the board plans to postpone and possibly combine the events in the fall after the pandemic has passed.

With less than pressing need for volunteers during the pandemic, Anne Gray realizes that "the next few months will be a challenging time to lead the Volunteer Committee." She looks forward to continuing to recruit, interview, and onboard those looking to get involved, though also recognizes that the onboarding process must be different for the time being. "Where we would normally be excited to meet each new volunteer in person and show them around the center, right now we have to do interviews online and put off the in-person stuff for later," Gray says. As the Volunteer Committee chair, she is also using the forced downtime to set up training sessions to ensure all participants understand their impact and need for compassion while serving as Resource Specialists at the center's office hours and in engaging with the community.

Less impacted by the pandemic is Charles D. Kress, who chairs the Awards Committee. Mostly working behind the scenes already, he and the committee will leverage their knowledge of longstanding advocates and champions of the LGBTQIA+ community and make recommendations to the board on who should be recognized for their service. Those honorees will be awarded later this year, likely at one of the postponed events. Currently, the center's Coming Out Day Celebration is scheduled for Oct. 11, though additional event information will be published online through the organization's website and social media posts.

With founder and now Reverend Carla Christopher transitioning into the role of Past President and allowing her to focus on her new ministry at Lancaster's Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, she passes on the baton to the new slate of capable leaders. The center's Executive Committee and the organization's board is now led by President-elect Tesla Taliaferro, who was nominated by Christopher, and will use his background of coordinating efforts and people to ensure the organization flourishes.

D. Maria McCargo Gable will continue her longtime activism within the York LGBTQIA+ community as she fills the role of Vice-President. Kevin Forry will bring his financial knowledge and experience as a commercial banker as Treasurer. Christina M. Stetler, with a background in nonprofit fundraising, will manage the records as Secretary.

Though in bloom, the organization has not yet fully blossomed.

The center continues to seek out those who wish to get involved personally and those who would like to contribute financially, as well as in other ways. There are still openings on the organization's board and each committee needs to have people partake in discussions. To get engaged, the organization requests people to contact them through their email at rainbowrosecenter@gmail.com, Facebook Messenger, or by visiting their website at http://rainbowrosecenter.org/ and clicking the relevant resource on the "Meet Our Team" page.

Voice Box

Notes from our readers

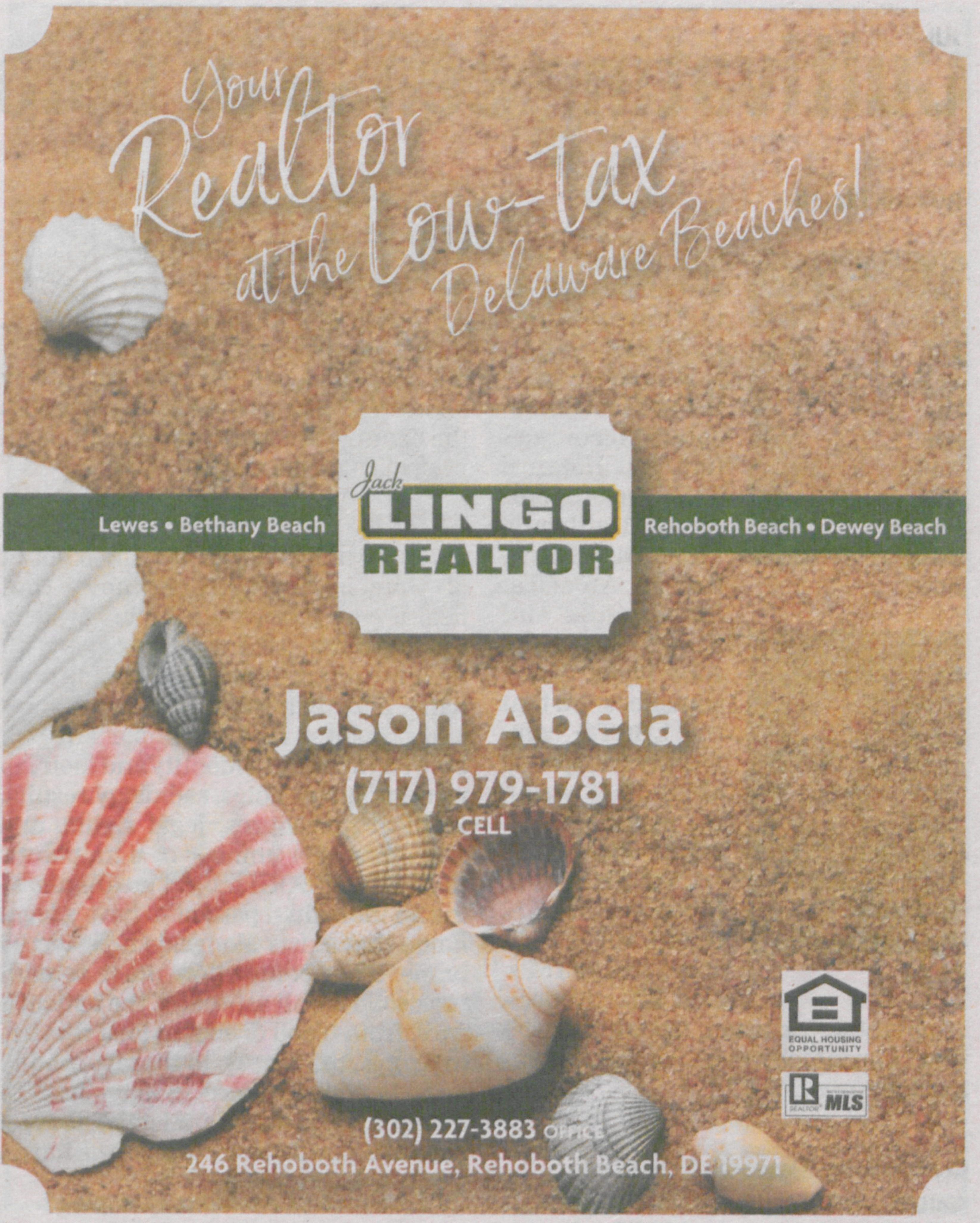
E-mail your comments to frankpizzoli@gmail.com

SUPPORT
Thanks so much for your support on all of this, Frank (Angels in America Zoom.com production)
Rachel Landon, Marketing Manager, Open Stage

THANK YOU
You did a wonderful job. (What a difference a gay makes, March-April 2020 & online)
Anthony Bullett, Huntington County advocate

WEB SITE
This sounds great! Thank you so much for this. (On www.thecentralvoice.com - COVID-19: Hershey's Homestyle Charlie observes closure; now plans a comeback)
Charlie Good, Owner, Homestyle Charlie

SPECIAL
A special thank you to the Central Voice for this piece (updating telemedicine procedures during COVID-19). We remain strong for our community and to those in need.
Rosemary Browne, CEO-President, Alder Health Services



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Cultivating sense of belonging for LBGTQ patients

By Frank Pizzoli

Pineo

Nixon

UPMC Pinnacle strives to be on the cutting edge of health care. In November of 2017, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health published Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views of LBGT Americans. Many statistics show that the LBGTQ community has special obstacles which they must overcome. Pinnacle's Dr. Dr. Thomas Z. Pineo and Tina L. Nixon, MHA, CDE, Vice President Mission Effectiveness, Diversity & Inclusion, assure reader's they're on the job when it comes to knocking down obstacles.

Central Voice: Research from many sources underscores special obstacles and unique stressors for LGBTQ patients when searching for health care. What are the stressors?

Dr. Thomas Z. Pineo: These stressors precede patients look for health care. 39 % of LBGTQ people are rejected by family members or friends, 30% are threatened or physically attacked, 21% are treated unfairly by an employer, and 32% of LBGTQ youth miss at least one day of school each month because they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. For transgender individuals, 56% report violence in their homes, 51% report physical abuse, 30% were fired or denied a promotion due to bias, and 41% attempt suicide. As a health system, these statistics are concerning. Our job is to identify these stressors and partner with our patients.

CV: And these stressors only compound health issues?

TP: Health care is our society's only 24/7 safety-net. Feelings of isolation and vulnerability are quite common when any individual feels the health care system is unwelcoming or unavailable to them.

CV: These stressors are up close and personal?

TP: Remarkably, 11% of LBGTQ patients report that providers use excessive precautions or even refuse to touch them. 28% of transgender patients reported being harassed in medical settings and 19% reported being denied medical care. Transgender individuals have had so many bad experiences in health care that nearly 27% reported being denied care because of their transgender status, and 23% did not see a doctor when they needed to because of fear of being mistreated as a transgender person.

CV: What is Pinnacle's inclusiveness based on?

TP: Our services are based on SOGI, which is an acronym for sexual orientation and gender identity. Many forward-thinking health systems across the country are working through SOGI projects just like we are.

CV: Break down SOGI in patient terms.

TP: Anyone who spends any amount of time in health care knows that health care is a very complex system. Furthermore, patients' lives depend on their health care system managing their name and their data properly. Names and pronouns form an important link between a patient's identity and their lab work, progress notes, radiology results, surgical procedures, legal rights, and any other of a number of data points. Rolling out a SOGI project means allowing an individual patient to have a legal name that exists alongside a preferred name. This connection must remain rock solid for all aspects of the patient's care, from blood draws, to food service, to X-rays, to surgery, to therapy, and to bedside conversations. Safety first! In health care, making a mistake about a patient's identity could cause real harm.

CV: Give readers a real-life example of how inclusiveness plays out day-to-day.

TP: I knew a mother who had a preadolescent child who was male assigned at birth and was given the name Michael (not a real name). Michael was in a supporting home and felt comfortable talking to her parents about how she felt. Even though the world thought she was a boy, she knew she was a girl. Later, she would learn that these feelings had a name, gender dysphoria, and that she was transgender.

CV: But not everyone knew of Michael's circumstance?

TP: As she got older, she had to engage with the medical system which required occasional trips to the lab for blood work and hormone levels. This particular day was a busy day at the lab with lots of patients in the waiting room. Her medical facility did not have the ability to accommodate her pronouns (she, her, hers) or her preferred name (Michelle). When her mother asked the receptionist that her daughter be referred to as Michelle, she was told that they could not do that because her legal name was Michael. A name change would mess up the lab work and the billing.

CV: And then what happened?

TP: Michelle sat in the waiting room with her mother for a couple hours until finally she was called by the lab technician. In front of a crowded waiting room "Michael?" was called. Michelle was presenting female and to respond to the name Michael meant she was going to have to "come out" in front of a room full of strangers, an experience she had had before. She looked at her mom and her mom understood. That day it was too much. They decided to come back another time when the waiting room was less crowded.

Unfortunately, this is the reality for many transgender patients who are trying to engage with a binary health care system. In order to receive the life-changing and lifesaving health care they need they have to abdicate control over their own coming out process. Or worse, they have to endure confusion and sometimes hurtful comments about their gender identity. The health care system is alienating some of society's most vulnerable patients.

CV: And Michelle's experience prompted action by Pinnacle?

TP: Motivated by people like Michelle, UPMC Pinnacle's Diversity and Inclusion Committee founded ways to help a historically binary (either male or female) health care system create space for nonbinary patients (patients whose gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation are something other than straight or cisgender). Making space for nonbinary patients in our electronic health record was an important step in creating a safer and more affirming environment for the LBGTQ community.

CV: Now in place, the SOGI system works?

TP: Recently we had a mother arranging surgery for her child. When she was asked about her child's sexual orientation and gender identity she responded, "Well, that is something we are working through." The conversation continued for a bit, and the final arrangements were made for the surgery. When her child came in for surgery, the affirming name and pronouns were used.

CV: Is institutional support is vital to the success of SOGI-like inclusiveness?

Tina L. Nixon: We integrated the SOGI system platform as an ongoing effort to live up to our values and to provide quality services to a population that has historically been overlooked and marginalized. Training staff was the right thing to do. We stepped insuring we had a process to ask about a patient's sexual identity and orientation so that we provide the appropriate prevention, screening, and treatment services.

CV: So far, the results of implementing the SOGI system have yielded...

TLN: Anecdotally, we have had an overall positive response from patients. When patients are truly comfortable with their providers, and staff is confident in their ability to the use appropriate terminology and capture information in a respectful way, it lessens the stress that comes with visiting a medical care facility. Our efforts will pave the way in providing comprehensive and affirming care to our LBGTQ patients.

CV: At the end of the day there is hope?

TP: There is hope to be found within each of us. We each have the ability to chip away at barriers experienced by the LBGTQ community. It can be as simple as acts of kindness or professionalism. It might be a question about pronouns or preferred name. It might be as simple as wearing a rainbow pin on a uniform to let people around you know that your space is a safe space for members of the LBGTQ community. Our goal at UPMC Pinnacle is to cultivate a sense of belonging in our diverse health care community. When people feel cared about, it is so much easier to care for them.

VOICE COMICS COLUMNIST

Nicholas Duncan's work recognized by Pinnacle Health Systems

Nicholas Duncan, Central PA Pride Festival Vice President of Entertainment and Comics Columnist for *The Central Voice*, was recently recognized by UPMC Pinnacle, where he works, with their Above and Beyond Award. The award acknowledges medical center employees who go out of their way to provide service Above & Beyond expectations of our patients, their guests, and one another. Duncan was born and raised in Carlisle, PA but has been residing in the Harrisburg area for over 20 years. He is blessed with a partner of 16+ years and their Chihuahua Corona Madalyn. For a number of years, Duncan has worked in the healthcare field and would love to be part of a genetic research team focused on extracting HIV from a person's DNA. He has been collecting comic books since the early age of seven. Duncan's Native American name is Sunny Stream, a person who is content and happy. His Pride bio says Duncan is "like a leaf that floats on the water, going wherever it may take him."

Open Stage's Angels in America to be live-streamed

A quarter-century after stunning the theatre world, one of the greatest theatrical journeys of our time returns to Harrisburg in an all-new production directed by Stuart Landon. As politically incendiary as any play in the American canon, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* also manages to be, at turns, hilariously irreverent and heartbreakingly humane. Tackling Reaganism, McCarthyism, immigration, religion, climate change, and AIDS against the backdrop of New York City in the mid-1980's, no contemporary drama has succeeded so indisputably with so ambitious a scope.

Open Stage will live-stream

After getting permission from licensing house Broadway Play Publishing, Open Stage is preparing to present the show via the Zoom app. For any size donation, people around the world can watch the actors connect in a new and powerful way, challenged by distance and location. Once the link is set up, anyone who made a contribution from March onwards will receive a password protected link to watch a live stream of the show, or watch the show in parts through May 15. The show will be presented twice and in six parts, unabridged. Anyone who donates will get a link and code to watch the show and get access to all six parts of this unique presentation.

Donate and watch

Any size donation gets you access to all 6 parts (any live stream), plus access to all videos until May 15.

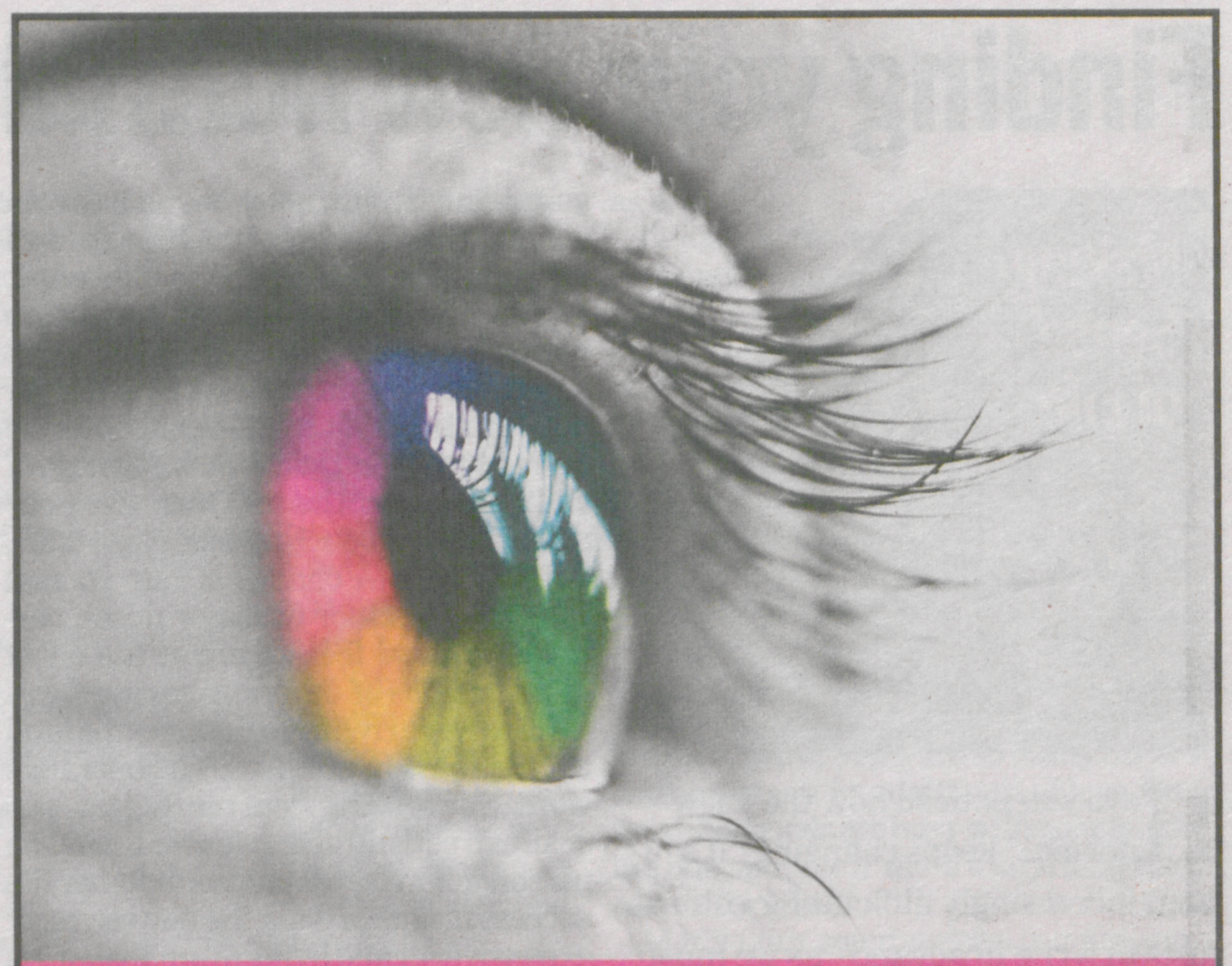
Angels in America Part I: Millennium Approaches, usually a 4-hour show will be presented live, in 3 parts.

Some performances will have a post-show discussion, entitled "Conversations with Angels."

Schedule of Performances:

Fri, Apr 17 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act I
Fri, Apr 17 - "Conversations with Angels" (post-show discussion)
Sat, Apr 18 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act II
Sun, Apr 19 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act III
Fri, May 1 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act I
Sat, May 2 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act II
Sun, May 3 at 7:00pm, Part I, Act III

Go to www.openstagehbg.com for latest details & updates.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Finding your new normal in a crisis

Making Sense of Life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

Have you noticed how the "new normal" keeps changing? It's been increasingly difficult for columnists to write in advance, as we must do because of publication deadlines. I'm writing this at the end of March, putting it off as close to my April 1 deadline as I can due to COVID-19. I have NO idea what life in south central Pennsylvania will be when this issue hits the stands.

To help us through this period of time will you agree to re-think what normal means to us, both individually and as a community? One segment of society can never speak of what's normal for everyone. It's normal for one person to go to church; his neighbor may be an atheist. The churchgoer might look down on the atheist, feeling she's not normal. But the atheist, in her normal, might see her neighbor as mis-guided.

You and I are the ones responsible for determining what we like about our life and what we don't, what we want more of and what we want less of. Often "normal" means convenient, acceptable, stable, and pleasing. A change of our normal can cause a minor or major upset, particularly if we feel we are at the effect of the actions of others or government.

What we currently feel defines the level of happiness in our lives. The operative word there being "currently," as our desires frequently change over time. One person might feel at one point in her life success means driving the newest, most expensive car and living in a mansion. As she grows older, she might be perfectly content with a smaller abode and an older car that's paid for. The decision you and I get to make is whether we're going to allow our happiness, our contentment, and our definition of a normal life to be decided upon by society or our own individual wants and desires.

When big changes occur in our personal lives, or a global event like COVID-19, having a clear idea of who we are allows us to maintain better stability while chaos swirls around us. That doesn't mean we won't become fearful of the future or angry about the situation at times. What it does mean is that our concerns will be tempered with confidence in ourselves and whatever we view as the unshakeable foundation of our life: our spiritual source, scientific facts, or for some of us, both.

If we are asked "Who are you?" our response (after a momentary pause or blank stare) will probably be based on the labels and categories into which we've been placed by society or our own decisions. It would do us well to ask ourselves that question. To find the answer, we can return to the time when we were children. What were our dreams? What did we want to be when we grew up? What did we really, really, really … REALLY like?

An exercise like this can often lead us to the career we end up in or the lifepath we follow. But it can also lead us to gently take stock of our current trajectory in life. Of course, the current global event we are living through is something none of us have seen. That doesn't mean we can't move through it and beyond.

Does change require change? Almost always. Some very talented people have never become famous, influential, or wealth because they were afraid of what they'd have to give up for that new life. Will my old friends fit into my new life? Will I want them to? Will I find new friends, and can I trust them? No matter what we achieve there's always a price to pay.

If the change is to our liking, we are happy to pay that price. Going to dinner at an expensive restaurant will cost us more – a LOT more – than fast food. But if that's what we want we know the price we'll pay. We only feel like a victim when we have to pay in some way for something we don't want in the first place, like isolating due to a virus (loss of freedom), closing our business or losing our job (loss of livelihood or income), or any of the many changes you may have had to make recently.

Like the rest of our lives, we have a choice. We can choose to complain and moan about what we don't have or can't do; or, we can acknowledge our circumstance and work toward changing it. The former is the easier path and the one taken by the majority of the world which includes feeling like a victim. But when we live our lives from choice we are empowered, confident, and successful.

Find your normal, meaning take this very difficult time in human history and figure out what and who is important in your life. There may be some hard choices for us all in the coming months, harder than we've ever faced. But by determining who we are and supporting who we love, we will come out the other side, better people, a better society, and more determined than ever to make sure something like this doesn't happen again in our lifetime. Travel safe. Be well.

Terry is licensed social worker in private practice in Carlisle, a speaker, and award-winning author – find his books on Amazon. Contact him at: terry@terrydrewkaranen.com

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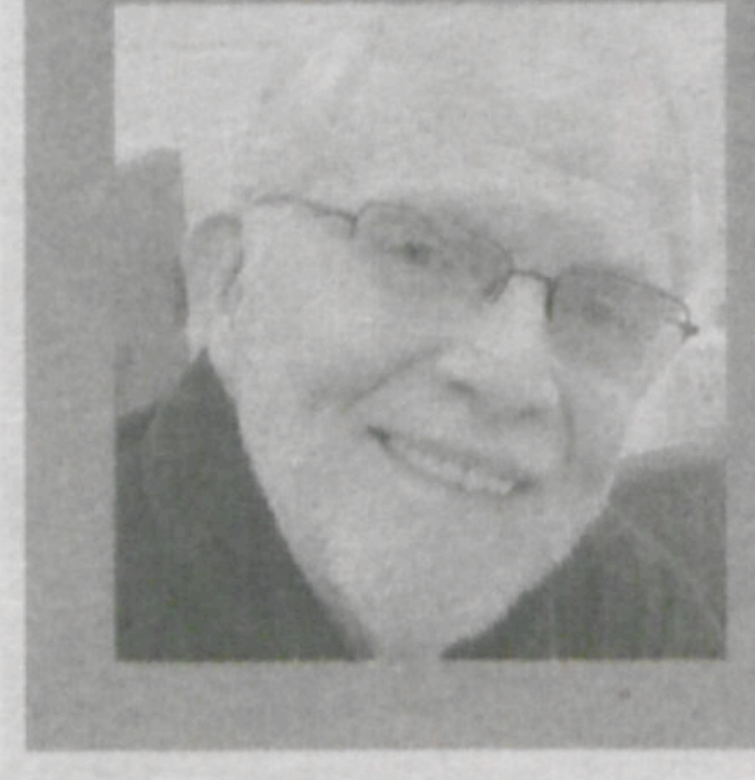
Love in the time of coronavirus

Ally in the Academy



By Trum Simmons

If there's ever been a time to be reminded of our shared humanity, it is during this pandemic. COVID-19 is no respecter of persons; it discriminates against no one. One's social status makes no difference, and for once, LGBTQ+ communities suddenly are equal to all others. But because of our shared humanity, I happen to believe that the only answer to the threat of the coronavirus is love. More on that later.

Trying to write a column during a pandemic is not easy. I've been having a hard time concentrating on anything other than the pandemic, and I know this goes for many *Central Voice* readers as well.

There's so much going on in the world, and the media saturation is incredible. We all want to know the latest developments because we are scared—scared to death. Am I safe? My family and friends? My colleagues at work?

My good friend and former editor of *The Patriot News* and then *Harrisburg Magazine* Ron Minard once said, "I was so scared I could have shit through a screen and not hit a wire." I think the coronavirus is about that scary, don't you?

> Beyond the first responders, nurses, doctors and all the hospital aides, there are so many others who are practicing daily acts of love.

How is one to cope with the immense scale of suffering and disruption? We know how the virus has affected not just the public health of all nations, but their economies as well. You may not get COVID-19, but perhaps you've lost your job or watched your retirement savings vanish.

And as bad as our situation in the U.S. may be, there are so many more people around the globe living and dying in even worse circumstances. Would you want to be living in Iran right now? Or Sub-Saharan Africa? How about a refugee camp?

One risks the daily experience of compassion fatigue.

Then there is the matter of how our elected leaders are meeting the challenge. What a mess. Our federal government is not the only one this applies to, but it's the only one we have right now. So let's have at it, beginning with the president.

Or perhaps not. I'm now at a loss for words, believe it or not. But I'll try.

A good friend and I often have the same response to the latest example of President Trump's daily displays of arrogance, incompetence and just plain bullshit. You can't make this shit up, one of us says, also referring to the millions of our fellow citizens who think of Trump as a great leader and who buy everything he's selling.

In fact, it really fits the entirety of his presidency, not to mention the many other national political leaders who have spent serious time trying to defend the president or simply looking the other way.

Thank goodness for leaders like Pennsylvania's Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine, who has been such a steady and supportive presence for us all. Does anyone object that we have a transgender woman in a top leadership position?

At this point you may be wondering about the title of this column, and why I believe love is what will get us through the pandemic, and Trump's presidency as well.

Longtime readers of *Ally in the Academy* may remember that the best definition of love I know comes from the psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck, who wrote the bestselling book *The Road Less Traveled*. He writes, "Love is the willing extension of the self to promote one's own or another's spiritual growth." (You can substitute "personal" for "spiritual.")

In other words, love is a verb: It is an action, not a feeling. And we have seen love in action on so many fronts during this time of coronavirus. Beyond the first responders, nurses, doctors and all the hospital aides, there are so many others who are practicing daily acts of love. Our neighborhoods are busy with people asking one another if there's anything they can do for them.

Many faith communities remain connected—albeit via the internet and social media—and aware of people's needs. All the Central PA LGBTQ organizations are ready for anyone who needs help.

We will get through this, of course, but it's going to continue to be difficult. Peck always noted that love means love of self as well as of others. Loving oneself is important; we must take care of ourselves first in order to help others.

I think I need to practice some self-love and do a better job of filtering out some of the media noise that has come with COVID-19. Perhaps my concentration issues will dissipate then. I need to keep the faith.

Excalibur #9: Menacing & bloody, celestial & puritanical

Comic Watch

By Nicolas Duncan

Synopsis: "Following a very successful Werewolf hunt, EXCALIBUR seeks unimpeded passage into Otherworld. But there is a great distance to travel before their dream might become reality…and great danger lies ahead.

I have heavy interest in horror and science fiction with a touch of romance, such as; "The Howling and a great read from 1940, "Darker Than You Think" by Jack Williamson, along with fantasy, such as; *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* literally intrigues the imagination. Suffice it to say, I'm a huge 'magic' guy… and I love "Excalibur". The exploration of magic through mutantkind/Krakoa's perspective has been absolutely fascinating and continues to be in this issue.

There's a lot of content packed into the pages of "Excalibur" #9 and writer Tini Howard is expertly juggling multiple plot points. The team of magic mutants is dealing with a brand-new omniversal threat while their enemies in the Coven Akkaba scheme in the shadows. Furthermore, this issue features three different magic rituals, all distinctive and unique in their own way. One is simply transcribed on a data page and it's no less engaging than the other two.

A huge strength of this issue is the small character moments found throughout. Tini Howard gives each character a unique voice that is true to them. Apocalypse is a sage mentor and cunning Chessmaster behind the scenes. Saturnyne leaves an impression in just a few short pages while Jubilee is a loving and protective mother to Shogo. Gambit remains distrustful of Apocalypse and lovey-dovey with Rogue while Betsy is still a bit insecure in her new role as Captain Britain.

Though, there are panels throughout Excalibur #9 with a touch of romance, I am disappointed that Rictor is left out. If I did not know Tini Howard's writing as well as I do, I would be questioning the "purpose" of Rictor without his man, Shatterstar. Howard is providing that touch of romance between Gambit and Rouge. So, why not bring "a touch" of the complicated romance between Rictor and his love? Now, I am not suggesting anything more romance portrayed from other characters. I am just disappointed that there is "less" when it comes to LGBTQ relationships. At the very least, can we please show off Rictor's personality more within this team?

Artist Marcus To's contributions to this issue cannot be stressed enough. Art can help or hinder a title and here it definitely helps. There are so many great moments. I personally loved Saturyne and her priestesses, especially how they contrast against Coven Akkaba. One group is menacing and bloody, meeting in shadow while the other is celestial and puritanical all at once. The depiction of Shogo's thoughts in his dragon form continues to be adorable and Excalibur still looks great in their fantasy-inspired Otherworld duds. The image of Apocalypse looking down from Starlight Citadel's sky is foreboding while Jubilee has an amazing action hero moment that is explosive, to say the least. With both great writing and art, I have no idea why "Excalibur" wouldn't be on your pull list.

Final Verdict: 8.5 – Excalibur #9 is pure magic that sparks the imagination!

Excalibur #9
Written by Tini Howard
Illustrated by Marcus To
Lettered by VC's Cory Petit
Colored by Erick Arciniega
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Release Date: March 18, 2020

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Dauphin County Library Book Reviews

By Yvonne Carmichael

I hope that by the time the May/June edition is off the press, The Library is once more open to the public after having been closed since mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But while The Library was closed to in-person use, many users were checking out our online resources. Since 2008, our e-book and e-audiobook collections have grown. And just in case you are drawn to reading or listening to titles on your smart devices or laptop, this edition's list of titles should be of interest. Remember, the Dauphin County Library System is here for you, and we have even more titles to enjoy. Visit us at www.dcls.org.

Gentleman Jack: The Real Anne Liste by Anne Choma

" In 1834, Anne Lister made history by celebrating and recording the first ever known marriage to another woman. Now the basis for the HBO series Gentleman Jack, this is her remarkable, true story. Anne Lister was extraordinary, fearless, charismatic and determined to explore her lesbian sexuality, she forged her own path in a society that had no language to define her. She was a landowner, an industrialist and a prolific diarist, whose output has secured her legacy as one of the most fascinating figures of the 19th century. Gentleman Jack: The Real Anne Lister follows Anne from her crumbling ancestral home in Yorkshire to the glittering courts of Denmark as she resolves to put past heartbreak behind her and find herself a wife. " (From the publisher)

Mercury and Me, by Jim Hutton with Tim Wapshott

"The relationship between Freddie Mercury and Jim Hutton evolved over several months in 1984 and 1985. Even when they first slept together, Hutton had no idea who Mercury was, and, when the star told him his name, it meant nothing to him. Hutton worked as a barber at the Savoy Hotel and retained his job and his lodgings in Sutton, Surrey, for two years after moving in with Mercury, and then worked as his gardener. He was never fully assimilated into Mercury's jet-setting lifestyle, nor did he want to be, but, from 1985 until Mercury's death in 1991, he was closer to him than anyone and knew all Mercury's closest friends. . . .No one can tell the story of the last few years of Mercury's private life'-- the ecstasies and the agonies -- more accurately or honestly than Jim Hutton." (From the publisher

Bobby Blanchard, Lesbian Gym Teacher, by Monica Nolan

"Wayward Schoolgirls! Wild Passions! And Winning at Any Cost. Welcome to Metamora Academy for Girls, where some rules are made to be broken. Roberta "Bobby" Blanchard is crushed when an accident forces her to leave the glamorous world of professional field hockey. As Games Mistress at Metamora Academy, she's dismayed to learn that sports take a backseat to literary and artistic pursuits. But Bobby's arrival at the elite boarding school will unearth more than one girl's hidden abilities, and spur some ardent rivalry between pupils--and teachers--on and off the field. . . "(From the publisher)

Less, by Andrew Sean Greer

"With the touching and very funny story of Arthur Less, author Andrew Sean Greer takes readers on an around-the-world tour, leaping from Mexico City to Berlin, from Marrakech to Kyoto, in a grand midlife adventure of the heart. Gay novelist Less--like anyone with such a name--is a hapless, dreamy hero, a man straight out of a James Thurber story. . . .Now, his most recent lover is getting married, and in an attempt to avoid the upcoming nuptials, Less has decided to accept every literary invitation on his desk. It just so happens that Less is about to turn 50, and his latest novel will soon be rejected by his publisher. (From Book Page)

The Mercies, by Kiran Millwood Hargrave

"This dark, dramatic historical from Hargrave begins on Christmas Eve 1617 when 40 men from Norway's remote island settlement of Vardø die in a storm at sea, setting in motion events that lead to witch trials and executions. Maren Magnusdatter, age 20, having lost her father, brother, and fiancé in the storm, lives quietly in Vardø with her mother and sister-in-law Diinna, of the Sámi people. That changes with the arrival of noted witch-hunter Commissioner Absalom Cornet, who comes from Scotland with his Norwegian wife, Ursa, to root out nonbelievers. . . .Hargraves's tale offers a feminist take on a horrific moment in history with its focus on the subjugation of women, superstition in isolated locations, and brutality in the name of religion." (From Publishers Weekly)

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A message about Lancaster Pride:

*Lancaster Pride is playing hardball with the COVID-19 virus, and is trying to hit a homerun to protect our community. Part of our winning strategy is to move the date of Lancaster Pride to **October 24th, 2020** to ensure the safety and security of all festival attendees. Please stay tuned for more information, and stay safe, stay home, stay fabulous!!*

For updates please visit us at lancpride.com and sign up to receive the latest information, and keep an eye on upcoming editions of the The Central Voice!

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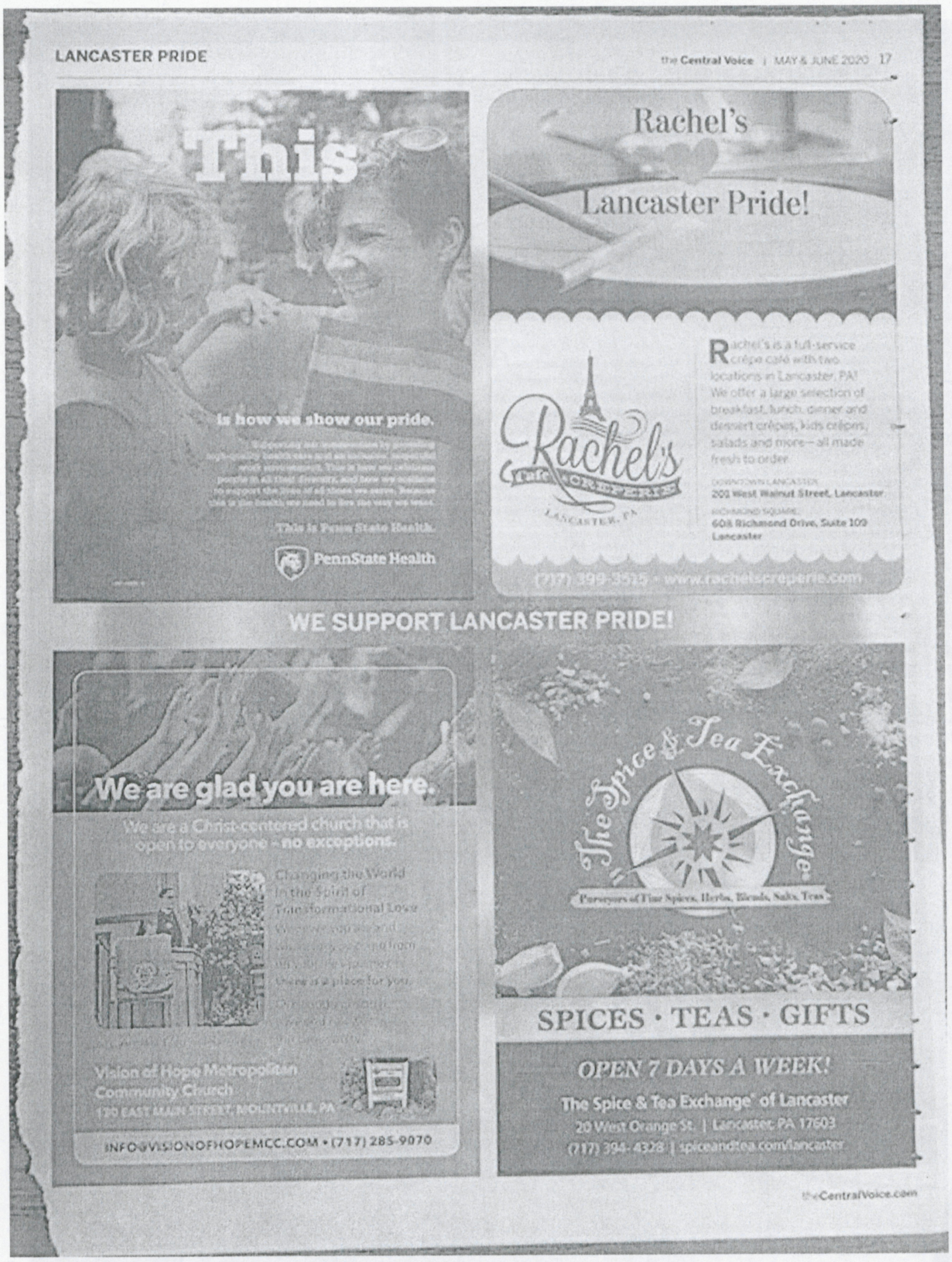

LANCASTER PRIDE

the **Central Voice** | MAY & JUNE 2020 17

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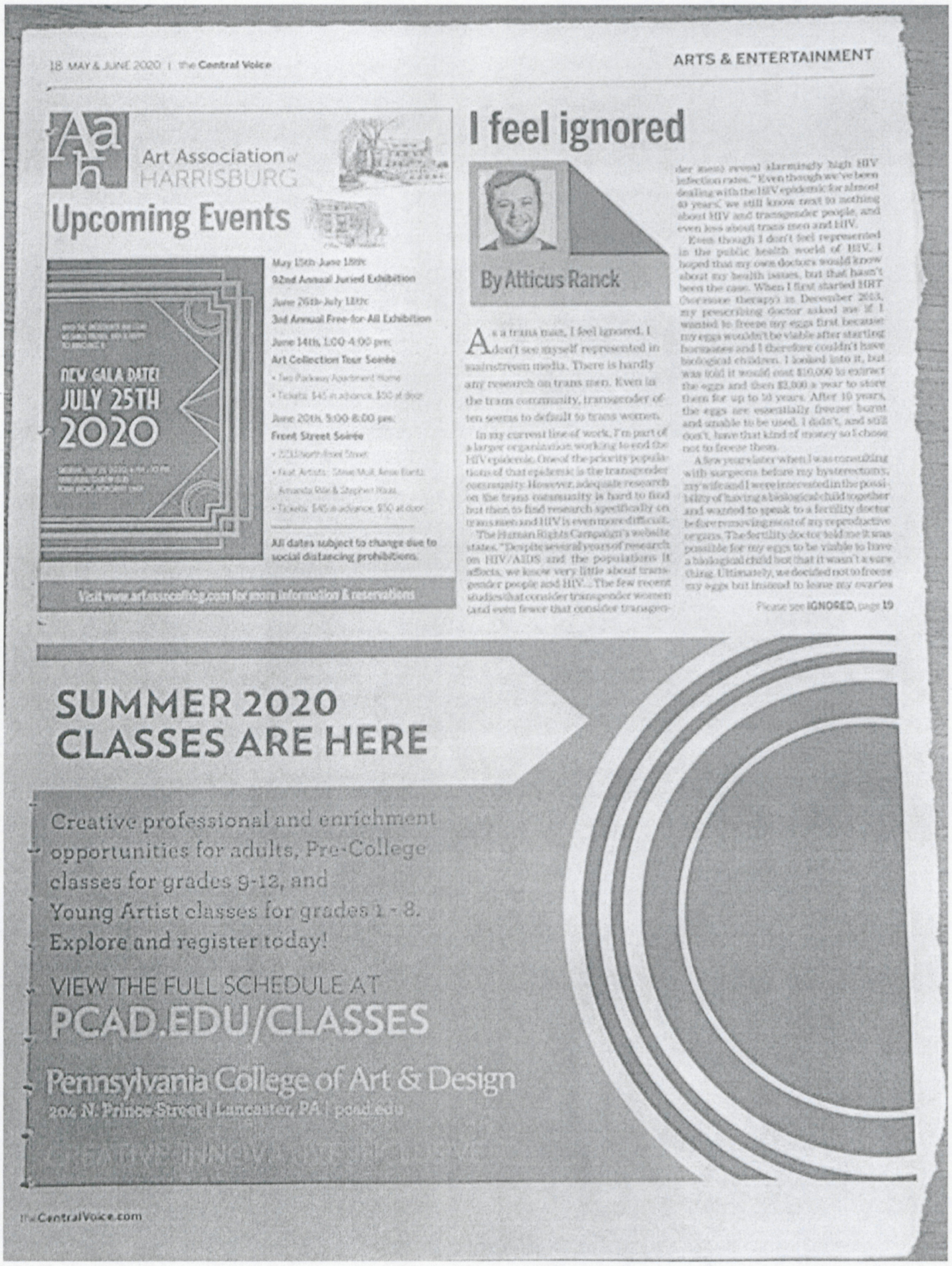

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June 20th, 5:00-8:00 pm:
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I feel ignored

By Atticus Ranck

As a trans man, I feel ignored. I don't see myself represented in mainstream media. There is hardly any research on trans men. Even in the trans community, transgender often seems to default to trans women.

In my current line of work, I'm part of a larger organization working to end the HIV epidemic. One of the priority populations of that epidemic is the transgender community. However, adequate research on the trans community is hard to find but then to find research specifically on trans men and HIV is even more difficult.

The Human Rights Campaign's website states, "Despite several years of research on HIV/AIDS and the populations it affects, we know very little about transgender people and HIV… The few recent studies that consider transgender women (and even fewer that consider transgender men) reveal alarmingly high HIV infection rates." Even though we've been dealing with the HIV epidemic for almost 40 years, we still know next to nothing about HIV and transgender people, and even less about trans men and HIV.

Even though I don't feel represented in the public health world of HIV, I hoped that my own doctors would know about my health issues, but that hasn't been the case. When I first started HRT (hormone therapy) in December 2013, my prescribing doctor asked me if I wanted to freeze my eggs first because my eggs wouldn't be viable after starting hormones and I therefore couldn't have biological children. I looked into it, but was told it would cost $10,000 to extract the eggs and then $2,000 a year to store them for up to 10 years. After 10 years, the eggs are essentially freezer burnt and unable to be used. I didn't, and still don't, have that kind of money so I chose not to freeze them.

A few years later when I was consulting with surgeons before my hysterectomy, my wife and I were interested in the possibility of having a biological child together and wanted to speak to a fertility doctor before removing most of my reproductive organs. The fertility doctor told me it was possible for my eggs to be viable to have a biological child but that it wasn't a sure thing. Ultimately, we decided not to freeze my eggs but instead to leave my ovaries

Please see IGNORED, page 19

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IGNORED

from page 18

in for the possibility that my eggs may be usable if we decided to have children biologically down the road.

However, when it came time to consult with the surgeons for the hysterectomy, one doctor told me to leave my fallopian tubes in because it would keep the blood supply to the ovaries and help increase the eggs' chance of staying viable, while another surgeon said they had never heard of that and told me to remove the fallopian tubes because if I was to get ovarian cancer it could likely start in the fallopian tubes. My doctors didn't know the best thing for me and they readily admitted that there isn't enough research on trans men and the effects of HRT on fertility or reproductive organs. The research simply doesn't exist.

It hasn't just been in the research fields, though, where I haven't seen myself properly represented. Even in transgender-specific spaces, unless it is specifically geared toward transmasculine individuals, then the premise is often that it's for trans women. When I was an intern in graduate school, there was a transgender support group at the organization I was interning with. Almost every attendee was a trans woman. I didn't feel like that group met my needs so I wanted to start a support group specifically for trans men. At the time, it was thought that trans men simply weren't interested in support groups, which is why they didn't come. But I knew that the men just weren't feeling heard. So I started a support group specifically for transmasculine individuals and 18 trans guys showed up for the first group.

It's frustrating to feel like your doctors, mainstream media, and even members of the LGBTQ+ community don't know you at all. We need more representation. I want to see more trans guys in advertisements that isn't even specifically geared towards transgender people. I want to see more trans men of color in leadership positions. I want to see trans men in discussions about abortion and reproductive justice. There's room for everyone at my table.

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5 things you should know about the report on poverty in the LGBT community

By Isabel Corp

In October 2019, UCLA's Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy released a report about the impact of homelessness and poverty on LGBT folks in the U.S. While there has been prior research on the rates of poverty among LGBT folks, this is the first that has looked more deeply at economic disparities for LGBT people and sought to include specific data for transgender people and people not living in same-sex couples.

Understanding how and why being LGBT seems to increase the risk of poverty overall, and what members of our community are even more at risk, can help us begin to address and improve the systems that currently pose obstacles to these folks. In an effort to break down this data, we've compiled the five key takeaways from the Williams Institute's latest report:

LGBT people are more likely to experience poverty than non-LGBT individuals.

According to the report, 21.6% of LGBT people are living in poverty, compared to 15.7% of non-LGBT people.

There are significant differences in poverty among LGBT people.

The report found that trans people experience poverty at a significantly higher rate than LGB people (29.4%, compared to 12.1% for cis-gay men and 17.9% for cis-lesbian women), especially in rural areas. The report also concluded that bisexual women are the most vulnerable to homelessness and poverty out of LGB people collectively, with 29.4% of cis-bisexual women living in poverty compared to 19.5% of cis-bisexual men.

People of color are affected at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts.

While 15.4% of white LGBT people are living in poverty, 30.8% of black LGBT people are—pointing to a significant difference in poverty rates by race. Latinx people experience the highest rate of poverty at 37.3%.

Younger LGBT people are more likely to be living below the poverty line than their older counterparts.

The poverty rate for LGBT people between the ages of 18 and 24 is 30.7% and appears to decline the older one gets, with the rate for LGBT people aged 65+ falling at 9.8%.

LGBT people experience poverty at a higher rate in rural areas than in urban areas.

Finally, the report took a look at poverty by geography and found that while poverty rates for LGBT people are higher than non-LGBT people in both rural and urban settings, 1 in 5 LGBT people in urban areas are living in poverty compared to 1 in 4 living in poverty in rural areas.

In short, where people live and how they identify matters. The Williams Institute report shows us that simply being LGBT increases one's risk of poverty, and that differences in poverty rates exist across the LGBT spectrum.

Much of what the Williams Institute report revealed informs the work that Family Equality does on a daily basis. While becoming a parent is expensive regardless of who you are and who you love, for LGBT folks, that cost increases significantly because of the added costs of adoption, foster care, or assisted reproductive technology.

Family Equality's most recent report, "Building LGBT Families: The Price of Parenthood" takes a look at the intersection of the relatively high costs of family-building for LGBT people and the disproportionally high rates of poverty experienced by these communities—and found that regardless of income level, the desire to start and build families among LGBT people is relatively consistent.

CALLED 'ABHORENT DEFENSE'

2 PA State Reps intro ban on 'Gay & Trans Panic' defense

Amid an unprecedented increase in hate crimes, state Reps. Dan Miller and Adam Ravenstahl, both D-Allegheny, have moved to introduce legislation that would ban the use of "Gay and Trans Panic" defenses in criminal cases by defendants.

"I was appalled to learn that it is still possible in Pennsylvania for people to hide behind hate as justification for their actions," Ravenstahl said. "As a strong supporter of the LGBTQ+ community, we need to continue moving forward to ensure that all Pennsylvanians, regardless of whom they love, have the same basic civil rights.

"Removing the possibility of this abhorrent defense from the books is a step the right direction and one that I hope will receive broad bipartisan support and swift passage," Ravenstahl concluded.

"To many Pennsylvanians in the LGBTQ+ community are living in fear," Miller said. "It is simply unjustifiable in any context that this type of defense can be used in 2020 as an excuse for a crime of violence. With acts of hate unfortunately on the rise in recent years, it is very important that we say, 'enough is enough,' and stand in support of our LGBTQ+ community."

The "gay and trans panic" defense theory can allow perpetrators of criminal actions against Pennsylvanians in the LGBTQ+ community to receive a lesser sentence and in some cases even avoid being convicted or punished by placing the blame for their actions on a victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. This "defense" has been used to "justify" both assaults and murders.

The defense strategy has already been outlawed in California, Illinois, Rhode Island, Nevada, Connecticut, Maine, Hawaii, New York and New Jersey, according to the LGBT Bar Association.

Similar legislation -- S.B. 212 – has been introduced in the Pennsylvania Senate where it has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Both Miller and Ravenstahl said the legislation is especially pertinent given the unprecedented rise in hate crimes in recent years.

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2017 was one of the worst years for crimes against members of the LGBTQ+ community. NCAVP found that as of Aug. 23, 2017, 36 hate-violence-related homicides of LGBTQ+ and HIV affected people had been reported, which represents nearly one homicide a week of a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

In addition to this legislation, both Miller and Ravenstahl have co-sponsored several other bills related to LGBTQ equality, including H.B. 1404, the LGBT Civil Rights Protection Act which is awaiting action in the state House.

What is the LGBTQ+ panic defense?

The LGBTQ+ panic defense strategy is a legal strategy that asks a jury to find that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is to blame for a defendant's violent reaction, including murder. It is not a free-standing defense to criminal liability, but rather a legal tactic used to bolster other defenses. When a perpetrator uses an LGBTQ+ panic defense, they are claiming that a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity not only explains—but excuses—a loss of self-control and the subsequent assault. By fully or partially acquitting the perpetrators of crimes against LGBTQ+ victims, this defense implies that LGBTQ+ lives are worth less than others.

One of the most recognized cases that employed the LGBTQ+ panic defense was that of Matthew Shepard. In 1998, Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old college student, was beaten to death by two men. The men attempted to use the LGBTQ+ defense to excuse their actions. Despite widespread public protest, the defense is still being used today.

What is the difference between the "gay/trans panic" defense and the "LGBTQ+ panic" defense?

The LGBT Bar uses "LGBTQ+" panic rather than "gay/trans" panic because the former is an inclusive phrasing which recognizes that the defense strategy impacts all folks in the LGBTQ+ community. To refer to it as "gay/trans" panic excludes violence against those who do not identify as gay or transgender.

Source: LGBT Bar Association

LIVED UNDERGROUND FOR 19 YEARS

Legendary Chicago 'lesbian of conscience' tells her story

By Frank Pizzoli

In Emily L. Quint Freeman's no holds barred 262-page memoir, *Failure to Appear: Resistance, Identity and Loss,* she gives us a gripping true-life story of a lesbian of conscience who became a fugitive, on the run for over nineteen years using several aliases. Through the lens of nonstop activism, Freeman describes finding her true self and her sexual truth during the turbulent late 60s through the late 80s.

In a big picture way, Freeman's story takes place against a backdrop of the Vietnam War, the Nixon and Reagan years, the Women's and Gay Liberation movements, and the AIDS crisis. In a more personal way, she delves into family rejection, the price of ideals, lost love, the agony of an underground existence, and personal renewal.

One May night in 1969, Freeman and seventeen others hauled somewhere around 40,000 records of draft-eligible men from the draft board office on the Southside of Chicago. They burned them as an act of non-violent civil disobedience against the Vietnam War and racism. The group waited at the scene, singing "We Shall Overcome", and were arrested. She takes us on her journey, living underground for many long years, before finally voluntarily surrendering.

Jewelle Gomez says "This book takes its place alongside the searing and sensitive memoirs of other moral dissenters who've helped change the course our history."

Central Voice: When did the political bug bite?

Emily L. Quint Freeman: I first got into politics in high school. By the time I reached the UC Berkeley campus, the 1964 "Free Speech Movement" was already underway. I went full swing into anti-Vietnam War protests and the Civil Rights movement. I never looked back.

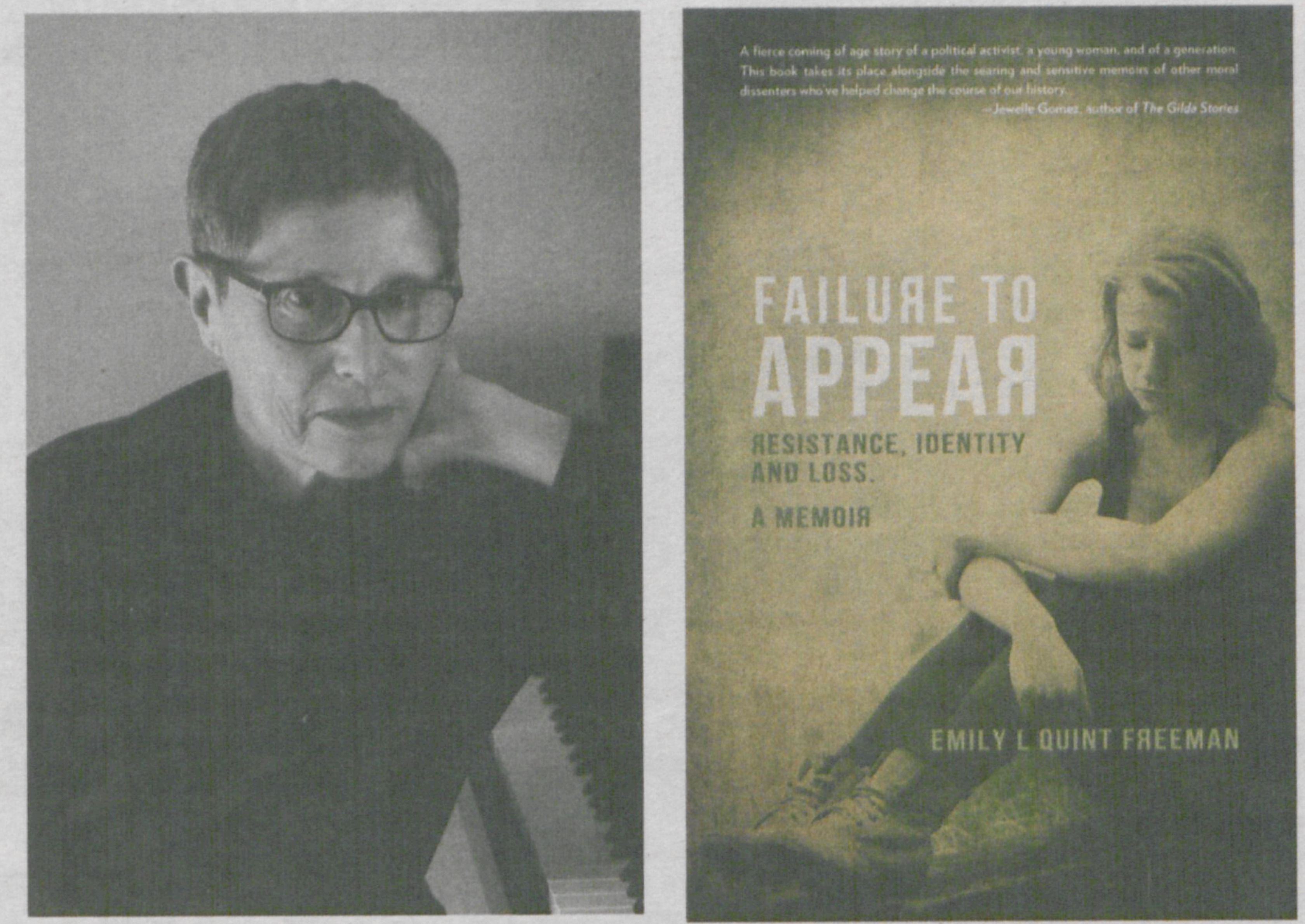
CV: How did your values form?

EF: I always felt like an outsider even as a child. I think that helped me develop a sense of empathy for other people.

CV: And other people helped too?

EF: My involvement in Chicago with a Puerto Rican welfare rights organization and the American Friends Service Committee, the social action arm of the Quakers, as a draft counselor helped to shape me too.

CV: In 1969, you and 17 others hauled about 40,000 records of draft-eligible men from the complex of draft board offices on Chicago's Southside. Your group waited at the scene, singing "We Shall Overcome", and were arrested. Any regrets?


A fierce coming of age story of a political activist, a young woman, and of a generation. This book takes its place alongside the searing and sensitive memoirs of other moral dissenters who've helped change the course of our history.
—Jewelle Gomez, author of The Gilda Stories
FAILURE TO APPEAR
RESISTANCE, IDENTITY AND LOSS.
A MEMOIR
EMILY L QUINT FREEMAN

Activist and author Emily L. Quint Freeman's memoir takes us on her journey, living underground for many long years, before finally voluntarily surrendering. Freeman helped change the course of women's and gay liberation movements.

EF: It was an act of conscience and remains so. My hope is that this act, prior to the emergence of computers, spared 40,000 + poor and minority men from fighting and dying in Vietnam.

CV: This action led to 19 years underground with the help of a radical group. It's your defining moment?

EF: I separated myself from that group very quickly, as I do not believe or support violence for social change, however laudable. I spent my years underground on my own.

CV: Tell readers what it was like to be on the run for all those years?

EF: I described it best to the probation officer who asked me what regrets I had for fleeing. "I regret fleeing to an invisible prison. I regret living a false, aloof life. I regret lying to those I care about the most. No matter what happens next, my life is stamped by these years as a fugitive." However, I never disavowed the draft action or walked back my belief in social justice and peace.

CV: Did the fact that you are a lesbian affect your social justice work in the 60s? Were you 'out'?

EF: The social justice and peace movement of the 60s was blatantly straight. So called "free love" was heterosexual. Activists like me were generally in the closet. Even James Baldwin fled to France to be himself.

CV: And this affected you?

EF: After an incredible but tragic first love in college, I wasn't active as a lesbian until much later in the early 1970s after Stonewall. I came to an understanding that my sexual truth required honesty and acceptance, first from me.

CV: When did you emerge from hiding?

EF: In 1989, I engaged a very sympathetic therapist who sensed the turmoil going on inside me. I confessed who I really was to her and realized that I had been living in an invisible prison and my life as an alias, lying to those closest to me, was acceptable no longer.

CV: What was it like being a lesbian during the early Women's Movement?

EF: Amazing! Daring, creative, a new movement of lesbian-feminist separatism expressed in music, poetry, theatre, prose, social scene, an ideological vanguard distinct from the mainstream National Organization of Women. Still quite relevant today

CV: What was it like being a lesbian during the early Gay Liberation Movement?

EF: Bars with no windows, fear of being rousted by the local police or outed, a double life outside of work, a sexual outlaw with a unique jargon, nightlife, and culture. My eventual emergence from the shadows was both exhilarating and dangerous.

CV: What was it like being a lesbian during the AIDS Crisis?

EF: I had a number of close male friends who died during the AIDS crisis. The book describes those relationships and what many lesbians like myself did to support their gay brothers. At first, it was a disease with no name, a plague with no name, a cruel joke that happened right at the time we could be freer with our sexual life. So, we were sisters, we were friends. Who could forget that the Reagan government responded so slowly and inadequately to the AIDS crisis.

CV: You've said that "In a mad country, it's sane to be insane"

EF: At the height of the carnage in Vietnam, violence and murder of protestors and civil rights leaders in America, it was really our government who was insane. At our trial, we attempted to make that point by pleading insanity so that our motives for striking at the death-dealing system of the draft could be made in court. It still rings true today.

SMALL BUSINESS from page 1

of advertising, promotions, emails, and hopefully word-of-mouth connections.

CV: Realistically, customer retention isn't the same as new customer development.

CG: It costs more to get new customers compared to retaining current ones And the cost to "relaunch" a business after a lengthy period of closure is substantial.

CV: For Homestyle Charlie, an owner-operated, small retail shop, is the challenge staying on shoppers' radar?

CG: I just hope that since all businesses seem to be in the same situation, and peoples' routines and schedules have been so upended, that once everything gets back to a sense of normalcy, small businesses especially will be remembered.

CV: Is there a trade association or merchant group you have consulted with on a reopening plan?

CG: I follow several business and marketing experts on Facebook, and everyone is sharing ideas on trying to both stay connected, and then re-connecting with customers when the current situation improves.

CV: Is there an upside?

CG: There are a few silver linings in all of this. The online shopping component of my website, which was originally scheduled to launch later this year, is now live. The physical store closure allowed me time to accelerate implementation.

CV: As business owners do all the time, you looked the situation in the eye and shifted gears?

CG: A lot of technical learning had to happen quickly on my part, but that is a good thing. When this is all over my business will be more well-rounded. I'm also going to be implementing some new social media strategies on Facebook and Instagram to strengthen my connection with my customers.

CV: Readers should stay tuned?

CG: Yes, they should. We should all remember that each of us is challenged by COVID-19, not only businesses. Each of us doing what we can is of utmost importance.

INFO - For more information, email charlie@homestylecharlie.com or homestylecharlie.com

Here for you; be here with us

LGBT Center of Central PA

By Amanda Arbour

How are you doing? That's a question that I've been asking a lot lately, and one that carries more weight than usual. Some of us are trying to balance full-time remote work with caring for our children full-time as well. Some of us are out of work and stressed about how we're going to pay our bills. Some of us are small business owners who have had to close. Some of us are battling the isolation of being quarantined alone, or the fear of being quarantined in places that are not safe. Some of us are sick or afraid that we'll get sick. Some of us are still going to work every day caring for those who are sick, growing and preparing our food, and collecting our trash.

In addition to our specific stresses, collectively we are all dealing with the stress and anxiety of something few of us have experienced before - a society shutting down to try to stop the spread of something that we cannot see and do not fully understand. It is bringing out both the best and the worst in our elected leaders, in our neighbors, and in ourselves. And it is exposing the ways that our society is continuing to fail those who are most vulnerable among us - something that we must change.

I have been reflecting on what it means for the Center to be here for LGBTQ+ people, even while our physical space is closed. Being here for you now means seeing your faces or hearing your voices virtually instead of in-person for our weekly groups. Being here for you now means making individual phone calls to check in and see how you're doing. Being here for you now means coordinating a virtual community network on Slack where community members can share what you need or what you can give.

As we have shifted and changed how we do our work to continue to be here for you, our community members, I have been so encouraged to see the many ways that you are showing up to be here with us. Brand-new participants are joining our virtual groups, now that transportation is not an issue, to be here with us. People are sharing information and tangible resources via our Slack network. Generous donors are giving extra during this time to support our ongoing work. We are building community, and being community, and I am so encouraged.

Part of how we're here for you, and how you can be here with us, is recognizing that while all of us are experiencing this pandemic, how it impacts us is very different depending on many factors - including our race and ethnicity, our income level and job status, our age and health conditions. As we come together to support one another in getting through this, we must be clear that our intersecting identities matter - and have very real implications on our health, our well-being, and our very lives.

We have seen both the unabashed racism against Asian-Americans that has accompanied this virus - and the insidious health disparities that are being magnified by it, causing greater numbers of black and brown people to die. We have seen millions of people lose their jobs and their healthcare coverage, creating a huge demand on unemployment benefits and food banks as people who don't have a safety net struggle to survive. We have seen people who are incarcerated or detained trapped in our prisons, jails, and detention centers with no way to protect themselves from this virus.

> **"...while all of us are experiencing this pandemic, how it impacts us is very different..."**

In the face of these gross injustices, being here for you and inviting you to be here with us necessitates that we are being in solidarity together with those among us who are most marginalized. It means not only picking up groceries for a neighbor, but also picking up the phone to call Governor Wolf to ask what his comprehensive plan is to protect people who are incarcerated or detained from the spread of COVID-19. It means not only checking in on family or friends who are struggling, but also checking racism whenever we see it or hear it. It means not only investing in organizations meeting immediate needs, but also investing in those who are organizing to change our systems.

It would be a great tragedy if, when we are allowed to leave our homes, congregate with one another, and open our businesses again, we all go back to the way things were before. We need radical changes to our systems that have been built to benefit only a few, and which continue to marginalize so many. These systems are not broken - they are doing exactly what they were designed to do. We need to create something new, build something different that is equitable, just, and accessible for ALL people - and that centers those who are most marginalized.

We don't have to wait until things return to "normal" - this work starts now, and each one of us has an important role to play. The LGBT Center is here for you, and I invite you to be here with us. Organize and advocate with us, protest and create with us, build and thrive with us. Be here with us.

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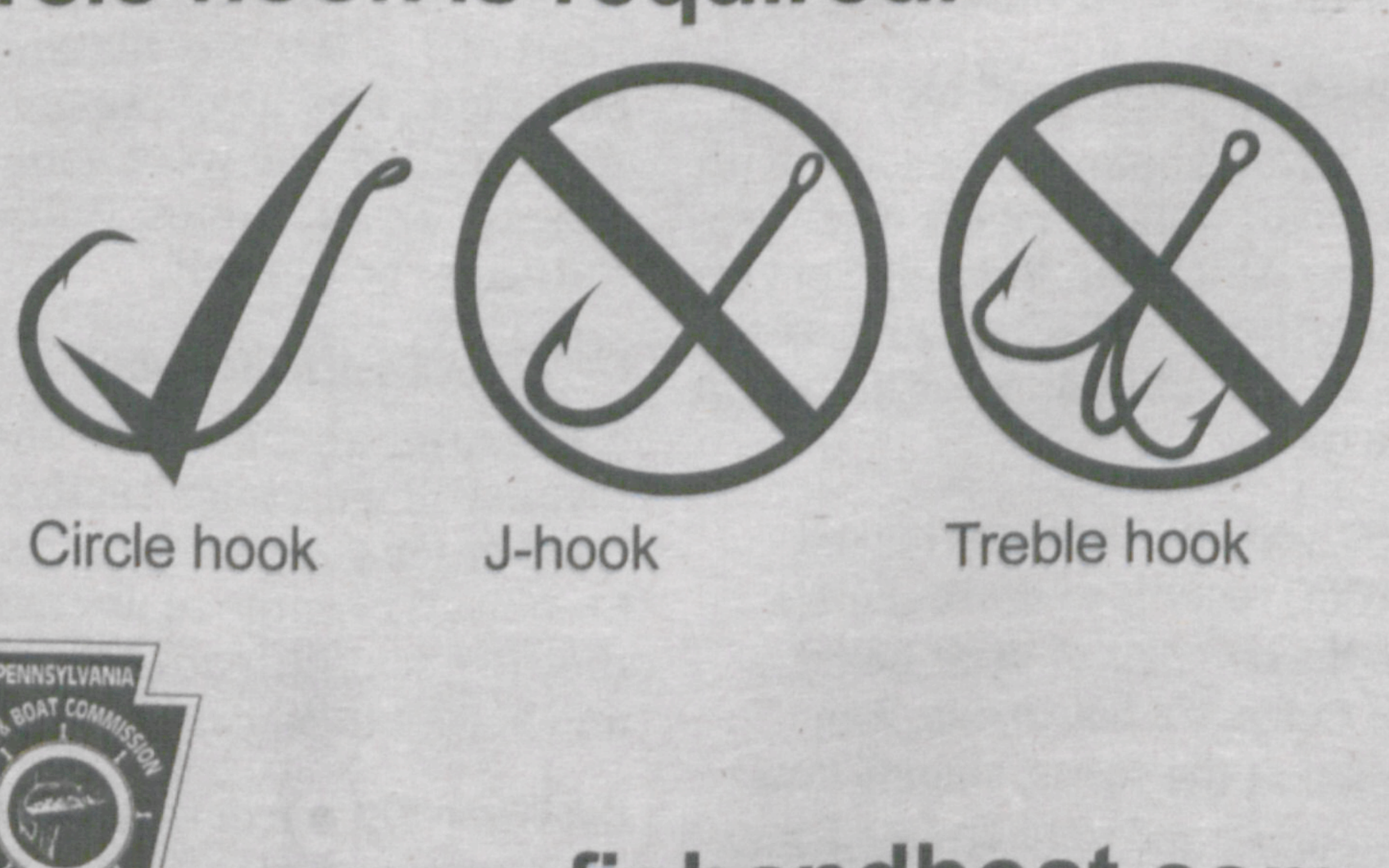

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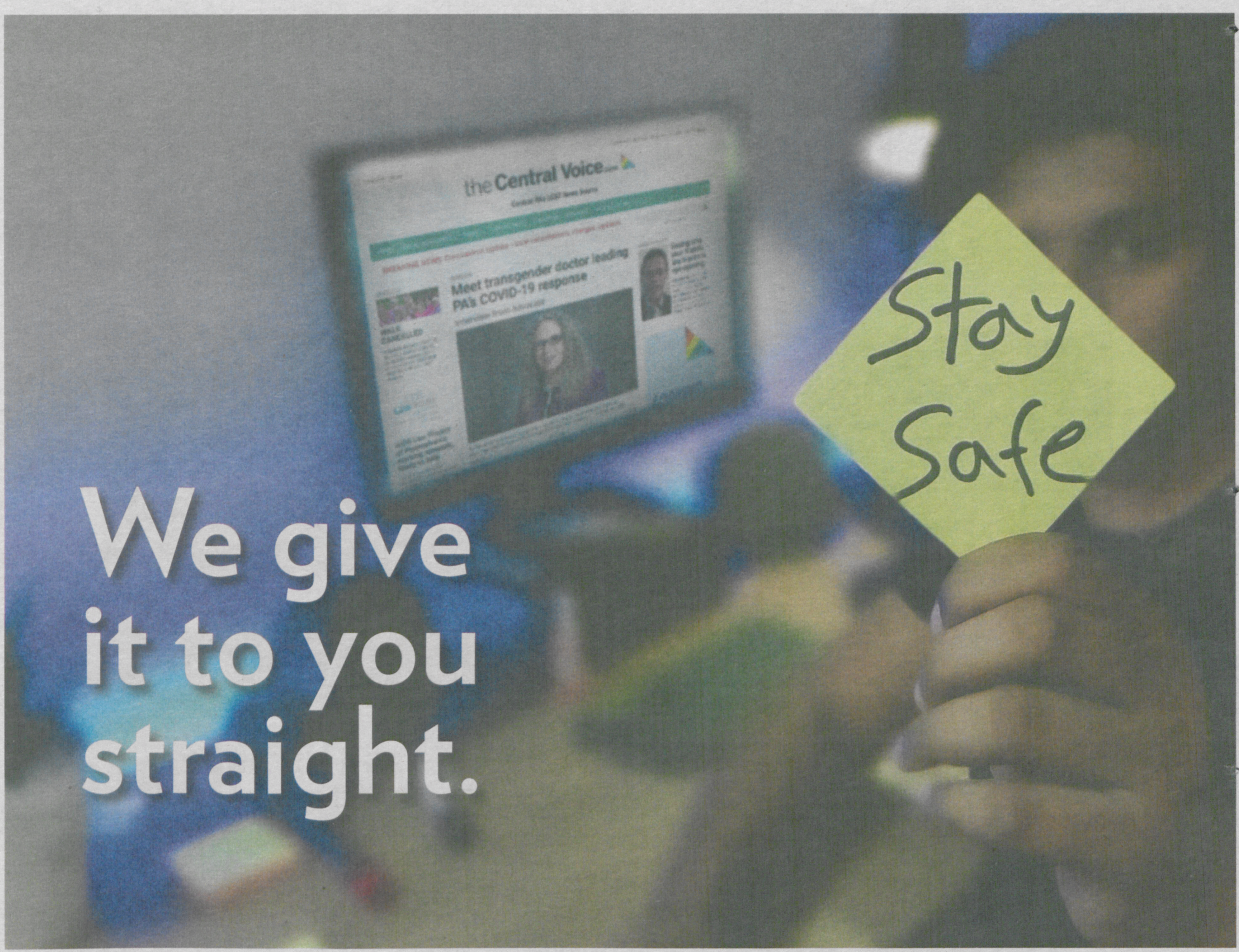
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